



# **Public Sector Reform in the Netherlands: Views and Experiences from Senior Executives**

**Country Report as part of the COCOPS Research Project**

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Coordination for Cohesion in the Public Sector of the Future (COCOPS): [www.cocops.eu](http://www.cocops.eu)

## About COCOPS

The COCOPS project (Coordinating for Cohesion in the Public Sector of the Future) seeks to comparatively and quantitatively assess the impact of New Public Management-style reforms in European countries, drawing on a team of European public administration scholars from 11 universities in 10 countries. It analyses the impact of reforms in public management and public services that address citizens' service needs and social cohesion in Europe. Evaluating the extent and consequences of NPM's alleged fragmenting tendencies and the resulting need for coordination is a key part of assessing these impacts. It is funded under the European Union's 7th Framework Programme as a Small or Medium-Scale Focused Research Project (2011-2014).

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## 1. Introduction<sup>1</sup>

Coordinating for Cohesion in the Public Sector of the Future (COCOPS), as one of the largest comparative public management research projects in Europe, intends to provide a comprehensive picture of the challenges facing the public sector in European countries and to systematically explore the impact of New Public Management (NPM)-style reforms in Europe. The project brings together public administration scholars from eleven universities in ten countries<sup>2</sup> and is funded as part of the European Union's 7th Framework Programme between January 2011 and June 2014.<sup>3</sup> The research is comparative and evidence-based, drawing on both existing data and innovative new quantitative and qualitative data collection, at both national and policy sector levels. A cornerstone of the project is the *COCOPS Executive Survey on Public Sector Reform in Europe*: an original, large-scale survey of public sector top executives in ten European countries, exploring executives' opinions and experiences with regards to public sector reforms in general government, as well as more particularly in the health and employment policy sectors.

Scholars within the public administration discipline have long underlined the need for more quantitative and rigorous comparative research, going beyond single-country and single-organization approaches (see Derlien 1992; Fitzpatrick et al 2011; Pollitt 2011; Raadschelders and Lee 2011). Moreover, few research initiatives have explored in depth the transformation of public administrations as triggered by NPM reform discourses in a systematic comparative form (Van de Walle and Hammerschmid 2011). Responding to such concerns, this survey offers systematic evidence regarding the dynamics of public administration reform in Europe, with the goal to create an encompassing and systematic picture of public administration after more than two decades of NPM reforms.

From a theoretical perspective the survey builds on the perception of three major reform paradigms (New Public Management, Public Governance and the Neo-Weberian State) as described by Pollitt and Bouckaert (2011). Focusing on top executives, it follows pioneering elite studies such as those of Aberbach, Putnam and Rockman (see Putnam 1976, Aberbach et al. 1981, and Aberbach and Rockman 2006), which lay the foundation for many other both national and cross-national executive surveys (e.g. Mayntz and Derlien 1988; Christensen and Laegreid 2007; Bertelli et al. 2007; Trondal 2010; Bauer et al. 2009; COBRA survey; UDITE survey).

Methodologically it also draws inspiration from cross-national population surveys such as the European Social Science Survey, European Values Survey, the International Social Survey Program; as well as from experiences with cross-national surveys such as those of the Survey Research Centre at the University of Michigan (2010).

As set out by the project's terms of reference the goal of this large-scale survey is to analyse national administrations (both ministries and agencies) in the participating countries and also to take a closer look at the policy fields employment and health. The survey aims to explore public sector executives' perceptions, experiences and opinions with regards to their work context and administrative

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<sup>1</sup> This introduction is based on Hammeschmid, Görnitz, Oprisor and Stimac (2013), and appears in the same form in all WP3 COCOPS country reports.

<sup>2</sup> Erasmus University Rotterdam, Hertie School of Governance Berlin, University of Bergen, Bocconi University, University of Cantabria, Cardiff University, CNRS Paris, Corvinus University Budapest, University of Exeter, KU Leuven, Tallinn University of Technology

<sup>3</sup> More information on the project is available at [www.cocops.eu](http://www.cocops.eu)

reforms, but also on other factors such as values and identities and the impact of the fiscal crisis. The core survey implemented in all participating countries consists of 31 questions structured in four parts (I) General information; (II) Management and Work Practice of Your Organization; (III) Public Sector Reform and the Fiscal Crisis; (IV) Attitudes, Preferences and Personal Information. The survey is a result of the joint work of all the national research teams within the COCOPS project and under the leadership of a team of researchers at the Hertie School of Governance in Berlin. In addition, further universities from other European countries were included as strategic partners to replicate the survey in these countries.<sup>4</sup>

Three essential challenges connected to the design of the questionnaire and the survey methodology had to be handled by the research team: a sample design that would allow systematic comparative analyses; an access strategy to produce (statistically sufficient) high response rates; and a questionnaire design and translation that would assure conceptual equivalence between all countries. As a general principle, the survey team opted for a balanced and pragmatic approach with a view on a maximum of quality and comparability, while still allowing for sufficient flexibility within each country's context. A core questionnaire developed by the survey team in English was translated into country-specific versions by the respective national research teams and – if assumed helpful – optional questions were added. With regards to the population definition, the research team targeted a group with relevant experience to assess overall developments and trends both on an organizational and policy field level. In general, top executives are viewed as such informants regarding the state of administration, given their privileged vantage point (Walker and Enticott 2004), but also, with the blurring of the classical boundaries between politicians and civil servants (Aberbach et al. 1981), due to their own role in policy-making and their influence on the choice and implementation of reforms (Christensen and Lægreid 1999; Ridder et al. 2006). A major critique raised against elite surveys however (see in particular Enticott et al. 2008) is that they usually focus on a limited selection of individuals at the top of the organization. As these individuals are relatively disconnected from processes at lower levels in the organizations, and also due to issues of desirability, such an approach is bound to provide a biased image of the respective organization(s). These are important points to take into consideration when interpreting the results.

In order to avoid random sampling and issues of representativeness, the COCOPS executive survey is based on a full census of all central government ministries and agencies. It covers all high level public sector executives who in their respective positions can be expected to be involved in public administration reform processes. A core set of binding sample principles, based on a detailed mapping of national administrative structures, was followed by all teams in all central government areas and especially in the case of employment and health. Deviations were only allowed if precise equivalence could not be established due to the specificity of administrative structures. Local government and service delivery levels were excluded for the purpose of this survey. Generally, within all central government ministries and subordinated agencies the two top-administrative levels were addressed; in some cases invitations were also sent to executives on the third level if, due to their policy relevance, this was deemed appropriate. State-owned enterprises and audit courts were not included due to their different task repertoire. In the fields of employment and health, as special

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<sup>4</sup> The Vienna University of Economics and Business for Austria, the Kaunas University of Technology for Lithuania, the Technical University of Lisbon for Portugal, Copenhagen Business School, the Belgrade Fund for Political Excellence for Serbia and the University of Bern for Switzerland

focus areas, regional and state government ministries and agencies were also included if relevant – without addressing however direct service delivery levels (e.g. hospitals, job centers).

Moreover, the survey explicitly covers different units of analysis (see Pollitt 2011: 121, on units of analysis in comparative public administration research) to allow for multi-level analyses: policy field, organization and individual experiences of the respondent. These are explored through the (self)perceptions of public sector executives, acknowledged in research as the closest channel into objective processes and developments within public organizations and, at least in the absence of stringent limitations, as reliable predictors of administrative behaviour (see Aberbach et al. 1981; Bauer et al. 2009).

The survey was implemented online, with standardized webpages being built in the national language(s) for each country. Flexibility was allowed, and even recommended, in the data collection strategies used by national teams, due to major differences in administrative cultures between the countries. A major emphasis was put on a thorough data cleaning and harmonization at the end of the survey, to make sure that final results were comparable across countries and that any deviations allowed during the implementation process were explained and controlled.<sup>5</sup>

The survey was launched in May 2012 and implemented in two rounds (May-July 2012, and September-November 2012). In these two rounds combined, the survey was sent out to over 20.000 high ranking civil servants in the ten participating countries via post and email (using either a personalized access link or an anonymous one), depending on each country's predefined access strategy. Invitations were followed by reminders and, in cases where response rates were low, teams took additional measures, such as phone or postal reminders, to increase the number of survey participants. In the beginning of November 2012, all surveys were closed, and all datasets were cleaned, checked and harmonized according to a standardised procedure for all countries.

**Table 1. Number of invitations and response rates of the COCOPS survey (by end of December 2012)**

Country	Invitations Sent*	Survey completions	Response rate %
Austria	1745	637	36.50
Estonia	913	321	35.16
France	5297	1193	22.52
Germany	2295	566	24.66
Hungary	1200	351	29.25
Italy	1703	343	20.14
<b>Netherlands</b>	<b>977</b>	<b>293</b>	<b>29.99</b>
Norway	1299	436	33.56
Spain	1778	321	18.05
UK	3100	353	11.39
<b>Total</b>	<b>20307</b>	<b>4814</b>	<b>23.71</b>

\*The invitations sent represent the final number of invitations that has reached respondents, after the exclusion of any failure deliveries, wrong addresses etc.

<sup>5</sup> The details of the survey design and implementation process can be found in the survey Research Report (see Hammerschmid, Oprisor, Stimac, 2013).

By the end of 2012 there were 4814 valid answers available from ten participating countries and an overall response rate of 23.7% (for details see Table 1). These answers are the basis for the respective country reports. The data in both the national and the integrated datasets are subject to strict anonymity regulations, to protect individual respondents, whereas aggregate data will be published according to a set of rules commonly agreed upon by the research teams involved.

The current country report summarizes the findings for the **Netherlands**. A more systematic comparative report based on the country reports of individual countries will follow in summer 2013.

## 2. Context and Status Quo of Public Administration Reform in The Netherlands

With a population of 16.7 million citizens, as of 2012, the Netherlands is a decentralized unitary state. The central government works in cooperation with lower level authorities such as provinces and municipalities. These three government layers had almost 300,000 employees in 2011 (CBS, 2013). The entire public sector (including education, police, defence, water authorities, etc.) employs almost 1 million workers. The central government mostly has policy-making tasks. Many of the executive tasks are carried out by agencies and or are to a great extent decentralized to the local level (municipalities, as it is the case for employment services). These decentralized tasks are financed through the central government.

The political system in the Netherlands is consociational, consensual, multi-party, and corporatist (Lijphart, 1984). Elections take place according to a system of proportional representation (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2011:291). There has never been a party with the majority of all the votes. This made cooperation among different parties necessary. The Dutch ministries are relatively open to making room for opposition parties to express their ideas and knowledge. This way, both commercial and scientific advice is accepted by policy makers (Kickert & In 't Veld, 1995). This is an important difference with regard to more closed governments such as Germany or France (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2011). Ministerial responsibility is the cornerstone of the system (Kickert & In 't Veld, 1995:46). This means that ministers are politically responsible, in criminal and in civil law.

### *Employee Development National Government (2003-2011)*

In 2003 there were 956,913 civil servants. By 2011 this had risen to 983,067 (CBS, 2013). This represents an increase of 16,800 FTEs. However, the staff of the central government in this period fell from 125,393 in 2003 to 119,064 in 2011. This represents a decrease of 5,855 FTEs. Remarkably, the years from 2005 until 2009 showed an increase of 6,984 employees before a sharp decrease is deployed in 2010. This increase was partly the reason for the promises made by various political parties during the 2006 elections to slim down the government. This eventually led to the most recent reform programme 'Vernieuwing Rijksdienst' (Renewal National Government) in 2007 (Luts, Delbeke, Hondeghem & Bouckaert, 2008:35).

### *Administrative Reforms*

Traditionally, the Netherlands has avoided a highly centralized government. As the subsequent section will show, the reform processes have often been about making the central government leaner by decentralizing more tasks to agencies and local authorities.

In recent decades, the Dutch government increased attention for results-oriented budgeting and focused on integrating performance measures into budget documents (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2011:294). The drive for efficiency and the adoption of business-oriented management ideas in the 1980s were not, however, accompanied by strong anti-government sentiments in The Netherlands, as was the case in some other countries (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2011:291). The strong trend of privatization and shedding tasks to ZBOs (autonomous administrative bodies) in the 1980s came to an end in the 1990s. This can be explained by the lesser need to cut back on public spending and the intention of the so-called purple cabinets to restore the 'primacy of politics' (Pollitt & Bouckaert,



2011:292). More recently, the focus shifted to the question of the core business of the ZBOs and the ZBOs became more responsible for the performance, cost and quality of their services (Ibidem).

#### *Programma Andere Overheid (Programme A Different Government)*

During the government Balkenende II, steps were taken with 'Programma Andere Overheid' to achieve an administrative reform at the state level. This flagship policy of, at that time, government party D66 was, although it was not entirely innovative compared to previous reform projects (Kickert, 2005), a combination of investing in the quality of services, saving on the overhead expenses and reducing the responsibilities and administrative burden of the government (Van Twist, Van der Steen, Karré, Peeters, & Van Ostaïjen, 2009:32). Rethinking central government tasks, reducing bureaucracy and the administrative burden, improving the organization and establishing an e-government were central aspects (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2011:296). A State minister of Government Reform, which falls under the responsibility of the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations, was also appointed. This post was held by Thom de Graaf (D66) from 2003 to 2005, then until 2006 by Alexander Pechtold (D66) and finally the project was completed by Atzo Nicolaï (VVD). De Graaf was forced to resign in March 2003, after the constitutional amendment for an elected mayor was not adopted by the Senate.

Reducing the size of the civil service was not one of the priorities of 'Programma Andere Overheid'. It was mainly about reducing the financial resources (Luts et al., 2008:38). In retrospect it can be concluded that only parts of this ambitious programme came into being, but that a renewal of the organization of the civil service has been largely implemented (Van Twist et al., 2009:81).

#### *Programma Vernieuwing Rijksdienst (Renewal of Central Government)*

After the elections of 2007 the Secretaries-General composed the report 'Beyond the compartmentalization - towards a leaner and more effective central government' (Van Twist et al., 2009:87). This was the reason for the 'Nota Vernieuwing Rijksdienst' (Renewal of Central Government) that forms the basis for the National Reform Programme. The premise of the programme is that the central government can work in a different and better way, and that it can and should be smaller, on the one hand by increasing efficiency and on the other by dropping activities already carried out (Vernieuwing Rijksdienst, 2007:7). This was attempted by a series of upper and interdepartmental plans (vertical), which were aimed at promoting cooperation between the departments and combating fragmentation (horizontal). Secondly, each department had to meet a percentage of staff cuts (Luts et al., 2008:41).

Unlike 'Programma Andere Overheid' the reform programme 'Vernieuwing Rijksdienst' focused in its core on the central government; other levels of government were disregarded. The goal was to achieve better policies and to properly implement this by slimming down the government by 20% (Van Twist et al., 2009:88).

It is difficult, however, to draw unequivocal conclusions regarding the success of the programme Renewal of Central Government (Van der Steen & Karre, 2010). Much has been achieved in eliminating the compartmentalisation, but in terms of the political debate on how this new civil service should be further decorated there are still many open ends (Ibidem:86).

### 3. Data and Method

#### 3.1 Sampling and Access Strategy and Survey Implementation

Because of the varying sources of contact information of public managers in The Netherlands, three separate surveys rounds have been carried out.

##### *Ministries and baten-lastendiensten: the ABD*

The “Algemene Bestuursdienst” (ABD) (in English: the general administrative service) provided us with the contact information of the three highest levels of managers at ministries and *baten-lastendiensten* (a type of agency). Senior civil servants which are paid according to salary scale 15 or higher are a member of this organization. These are public managers who have integral responsibility over staff and resources. Members of the senior civil service were informed about the research directly by the ABD on 30 August 2012 through information in the ABD digital newsletter. Prior to sending the e-mail, the entire sample received a letter announcing the research on 6 September 2012, as well as a flyer about COCOPS. The survey was sent out to 544 of them by e-mail and to 4 of them by regular mail at 10 September 2012. On 17 September, a reminder was sent to non-responders. When response remained low after reminders, it was decided to send a new round of questionnaires by post to all non-responders in October. This led to a doubling in responses. Frequent moves of top managers lead to rapid deterioration in the sample. In 38 cases, respondents had moved, were unavailable, or address information was incorrect.

##### *Zelfstandig Bestuursorgaan: ZBO*

In order to gather the contact information of top managers at ZBOs (independent administrative organ), we first used the list of ZBOs within the most recent central government budget. Then we gathered contact information available at their websites. Not all ZBOs did, however, have a website or provide contact information of their managers at their websites. Early June, we started contacting organizations to provide us with those missing e-mail addresses. One reminder was sent to organizations who did not react. In The Netherlands, many organizations are a ZBO, or are partly a ZBO. In order to retain comparability among nations, we excluded some organizations from our list which hardly have a public function. These include the organizations in the clusters “Keuringsinstanties als bedoeld in artikel 10.3 Telecommunicatiewet”, “Keuringsinstanties Scheepuitrusting”, “Keuringsartsen Scheepvaart”, “APK-erkenninghouders”, “Keuringsinstanties op grond van de Wet op de Medische Hulpmiddelen”, “Regionale Grondkamers” and “Keuringsinstanties op grond van de Warenwet” which have an approval authority. Due to the status of some educational institutions - some are ZBOs while others are not - we removed all educational institutions from the sample. The NVAO is, however, still part of the sample. Besides those, we also excluded Civil-law notaries and “Klaasbureaus art. 6 Schepewet en art. 6 en 3.1 Schepenbesluit 1965” and “UHIJ”. There are also some agencies, which only have a board and no staff: agencies within the cluster “Registratiecommissies en opleidingscolleges KNMG, KNMP en NMT” and the “Huurcommissie”. Three ZBOs are not included because they are not a ZBO anymore “Stichting Joods Humanitair Fonds”, “Stichting fonds voor beeldende kunsten, vormgeving en bouwkunst” and the “Mondriaanstichting”. The last two merged onto the “Mondrian Fonds” which is included in the sample. Finally, we were not able to find any contact information for 13 ZBOs, which are therefore,

also not part of our sample. Besides the organizations which we excluded, 17 organizations did not want to participate in the survey for various reasons. One of the most often mentioned reasons were that they are too small, or do not have own staff. In total, 160 respondents within ZBOs received a letter announcing the survey at 9 July 2012. The survey was sent to them by e-mail at 12 July 2012. At 1 August 2012, a reminder was sent to non-responders.

#### *Employment sector*

In order to gather the contact information of top managers in the employment sector, we contacted “Divosa”. Divosa is the Dutch association of municipal employees in the field of participation, employment and income. Divosa provided us with a full contact list of their members. While these include mostly managers over departments and units, there are also some members which are policy makers.

Besides communicating the research to their members, Divosa also took care of publishing an announcement on their website news section on 23 August 2012, and an article featuring COCOPS and an announcement of the survey was published in the July issue of Sprank, the associations’ print magazine. After that, all members of Divosa received a letter announcing the survey at 5 September 2012, as a joint letter by Divosa and COCOPS, featuring both logos. The survey was sent to them by e-mail at 10 September 2012. Surveys were sent on behalf of Divosa, which is a well-respected organization among Dutch public employees, and this increased the likelihood of the emails being read. On 17 September 2012, a reminder was sent to non-responders.

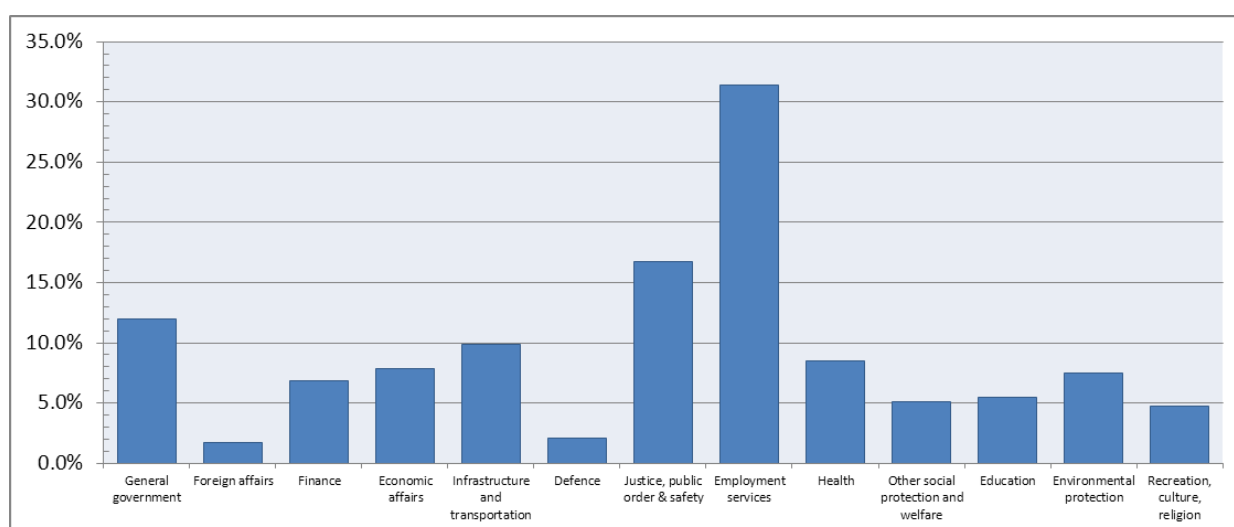
Unless stated otherwise, we report findings by referring to the first three categories (for seven point Likert scales) as ‘disagreed’/‘unimportant’, and categories 5-7 as ‘agreed’/‘important’.

## **3.2 Organizational Context of Respondents**

First, we look at the organizational background of respondents of the COCOPS survey. Respondents were asked to indicate in which policy field they would situate the organization they work for. From figure 1 we can see the percentage shares for all mentioned policy fields. They included fields such as employment services, public order and safety, general government, infrastructure and transportation, economic affairs, among others. The questionnaire also included the possibility to specify a field if it was not included in the list (see COCOPS questionnaire for further details).

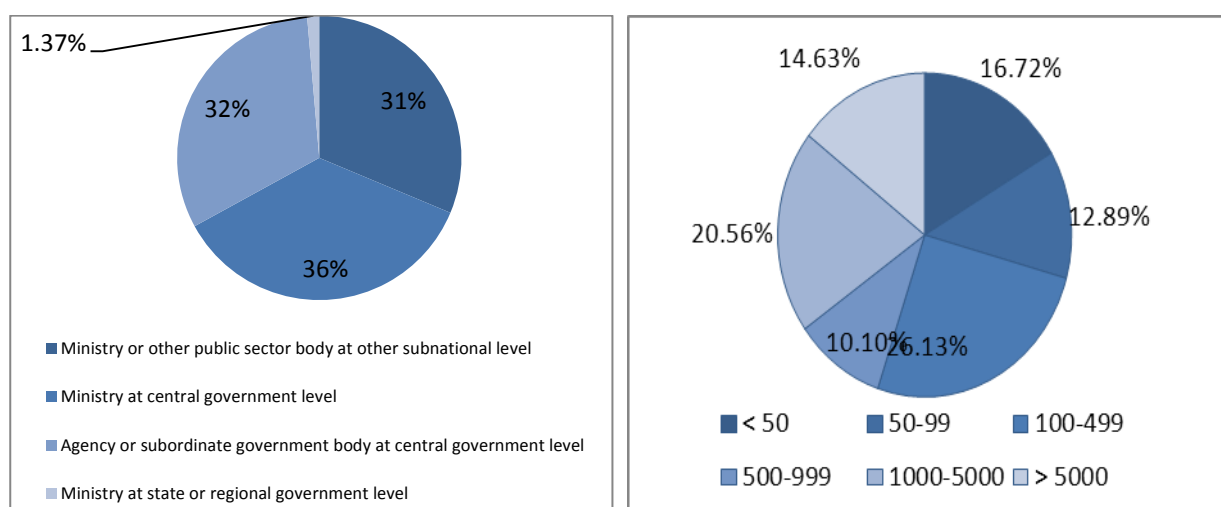
The greatest share of our sample of public executives belongs to the Dutch employment sector (more than 30%). This is because employment services were oversampled (see section 3.1). The second biggest policy field within the Dutch sample is justice, public order and safety. Here we have more than 15 percent of the entire sample within this particular policy field. Next, central government and infrastructure and transportation comprise each roughly 10% of the entire Dutch sample.

Figure 1. Policy field sample shares



The survey also asked respondents to indicate the organizational type of the organization they work for. Answer possibilities included 'Ministry at central government level', 'Agency or subordinate body at central government level', 'Ministry at state or regional level', 'Agency or subordinate government body at state or regional government level', 'Ministry or other public sector body at other subnational level', and 'Other'. From figure 2 we can see that 36% of the entire Dutch sample belongs to a ministry at the central government level. Moreover, 32 and 31 percent belong to an agency or subordinate government body at central level, and a ministry or other public sector body at other subnational level, respectively. The latter can be explained by the large share of organizations sampled from the employment services, which are situated at the local government level. Also, 1% of respondents' organizations can be categorized as a ministry at state or regional government level. Finally, respondents were also asked about the approximate overall number of employees (in heads, not FTE) in their organizations. Percentage shares are reported in the right panel of figure 2. It shows that organizations with 100-499 employees are the biggest group (26%). Nevertheless, remaining groups are well distributed, each consisting of between 10 to 20 % of the entire sample.

Figure 2. Organization type and size shares

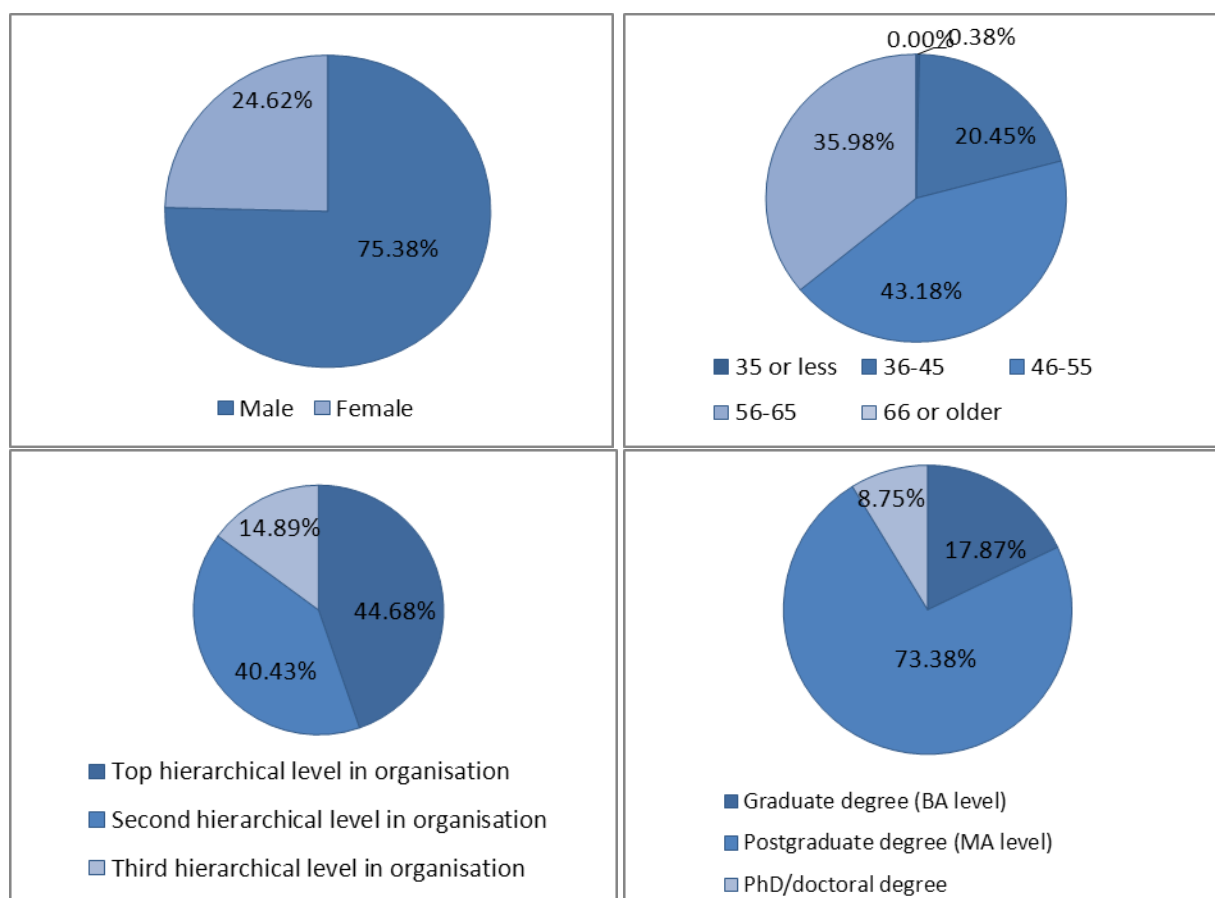


### 3.3 Socio-demographic Background of Respondents

The questionnaire also asked for the more general socio-demographic background of public executives. In figure 4, percentage shares are displayed for respondents' gender, age, their hierarchical position in the organization, and educational background. As one can see from the upper left panel of figure 4, three fourths of the sample are male. This is in line with the general representation of women in top executive positions in the Dutch public sector. Moreover, the upper panel on the right indicates that the biggest share of respondents is between the age of 46 and 55 (43%). But there is also a large number of respondents falling into the age categories '36-45 years old' (36%), and '46-55 years old' (21%). Given that the COCOPS survey especially targeted top executives, and that such relatively high positions take time to achieve, it is not surprising that we found only a very minor share of respondents to be aged 35 or less.

The lower left panel in figure 3 indicates the hierarchical position of respondents. While only 15% of respondents are at the third hierarchical level, the second and the top levels together account for 85% of the respondents (second hierarchical tier: 40%; top tier: 45%). The lower right panel displays the educational background of survey respondents. Not surprisingly, the greatest share of respondents has earned a MA degree or equivalent; 18% have obtained a doctoral degree, while almost 9% have a degree at the BA level.

Figure 3. Socio-demographic shares (f.l.t.r.) Gender, Age, Hierarchy in organization, Educational background



The COCOPS survey also asked respondents for their field of study. The majority of respondents studied management related subjects, including economics (34%). Law is slightly above 20%. 17% of respondents have a background in political science and/ or public administration. The latter is a very established field of study in The Netherlands. A large share of the sample studied other social sciences, including the humanities (24%), and 13% natural sciences, or engineering. Overall, this shows that Dutch top executives come from a diverse range of academic backgrounds, however, management studies and related subjects are clearly at the forefront. Given that 60% of the respondents have prior private sector experience (figure 5) this is not surprising, and may point in the direction that for top executives in The Netherlands, management skills are important prerequisites.

Figure 4. Educational fields (respondents could check more than one field)

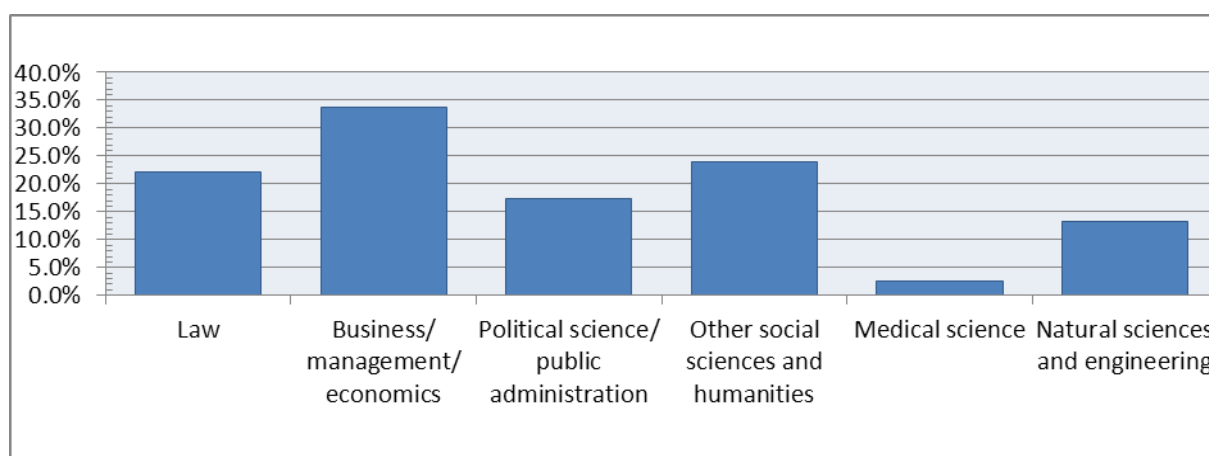
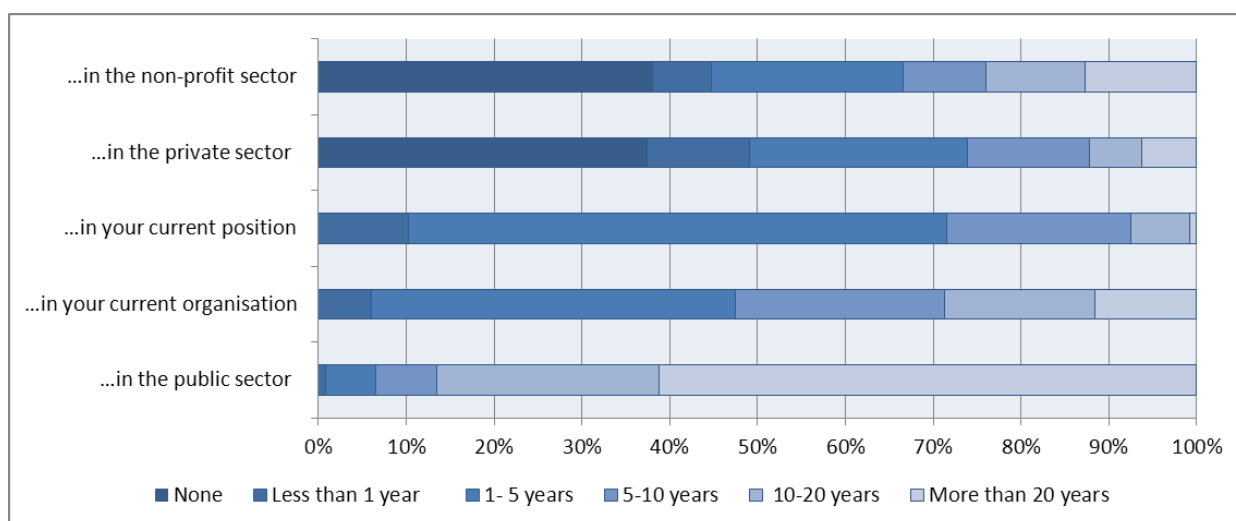


Figure 6 beneath provides an overview of how many years respondents have been working in various sectors, including their own organisation and position. First we can clearly see that 60% of respondents have prior private sector experience. Furthermore, a significant share of respondents has prior non-profit-sector experience (60%), though slightly less than the aforementioned item on private-sector experience. It seems that prior experience in other sectors is beneficial for obtaining a top position in the Dutch public sector. Other items asked for respondents' tenure in their current position. A substantial amount of top executives who answered the questionnaire have been in their current position for 1-5 years (61%). Shares decrease strongly for the other categories. This does not come as a surprise, given the tendency to for top executives to occupy fixed-term positions. Still, the figure shows that a fair share of respondents has been in their current position for more than 20 years. The figure also displays respondents' tenure within their current organization, and it again shows again that most people have been in their organization for 1-5 years; however, when compared to the previous item, the share is smaller (41%). The number of people who have stayed with their current organisation for much longer is high. This could be so because many respondents got promoted within the same organization. The last item presents respondents' tenure within the public sector. It shows that most public executives have stayed within the public sector for a substantial time highlighting that the concept of 'civil servant for a lifetime' is still (partially) valid (except for the prior experience in the private or non-profit sector).

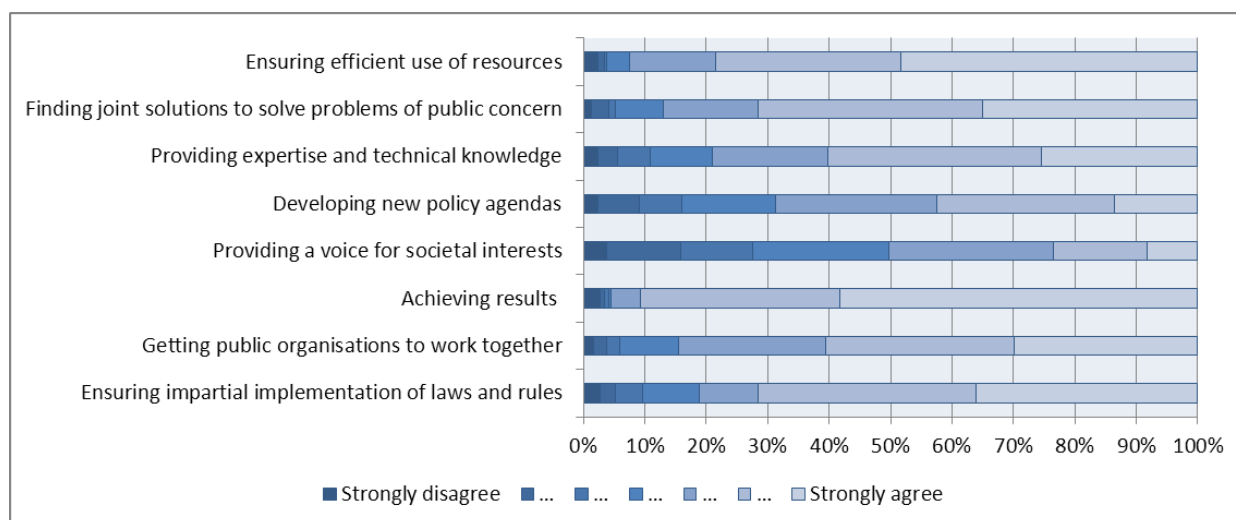
Figure 5. Tenure of respondents



## 4. Values and Attitudes of Public Sector Executives

Another section of the questionnaire focused on top executives' values and attitudes. First, on a scale ranging from 1 'strongly disagree' to 7 'strongly agree', they have been asked to indicate how they understand their own position as top public sector executive. More than 90% of the respondents indicated that they understand their role as public executive mainly by ensuring an efficient use of resources. This points in the direction that public executives think, indeed, that economic motives are one of the major aims in their work. When asked whether they think finding joint solutions to solve problems of public concern is part of their task, a substantial amount of respondents agree (85%). However, respondents have a weaker tendency to opt for the higher categories (strongly agree) as compared to the previous items. Nevertheless, we can see that the importance of coordination in the public interest is strongly present in top public officials' self-identification. This is not surprising given the network-style governance arrangements within the Dutch public sector. When asked whether 'achieving results' is seen as part of one's role as top executive, 90% of respondents opt for the two highest categories. This, again, shows that Dutch public executives find that achieving results is one of the most important aims of their work. It is in line with more general public sector reforms in The Netherlands (see section 2), which placed a greater emphasis on performance management to measure results and private-sector oriented management techniques. In line with this tendency, public executives seem to be very reluctant in understanding their role as providing a voice for society, as can be seen from item 5.

Figure 6. Identity and self-understanding (Q: *I mainly understand my role as public executive as*)

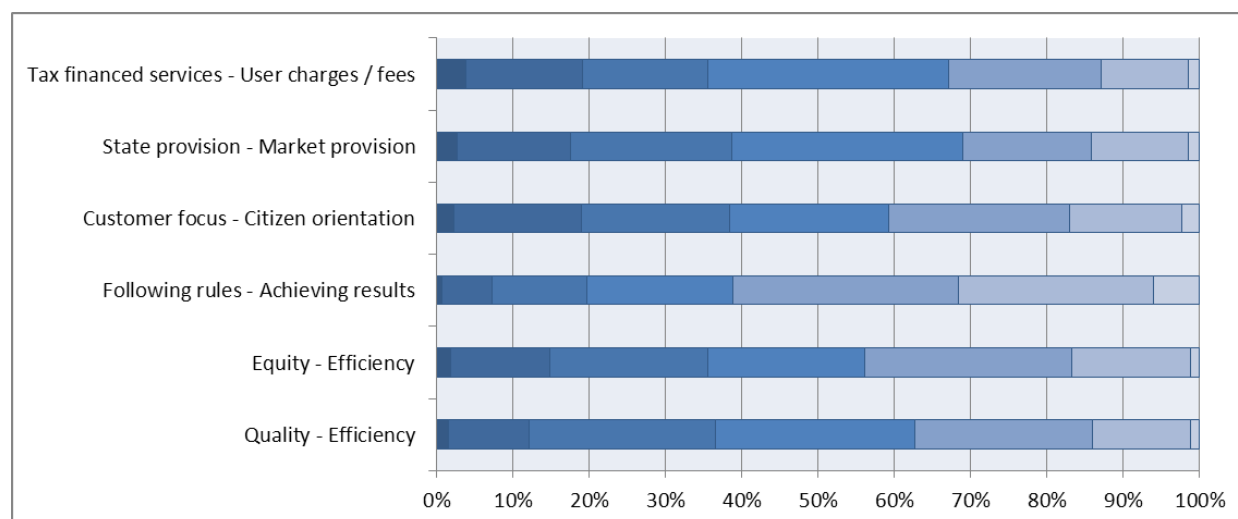


Next, top executives have been asked about value preferences related to public administration. The question was designed in way to let respondents choose between two opposing values on a 7 point Likert scale: e.g., when balancing different priorities, would you position yourself more towards tax financed services or towards user charges/ fess. The most remarkable outcome is for item number 3 which probes for choosing between 'following rules' or 'achieving results'. Findings show that respondents rather want to deliver results than follow rules. This is in line with the findings reported in table 6 where we have seen the importance of achieving results in public executives' self-understanding. This clearly reflects a strong adherence to New Public Management-style values



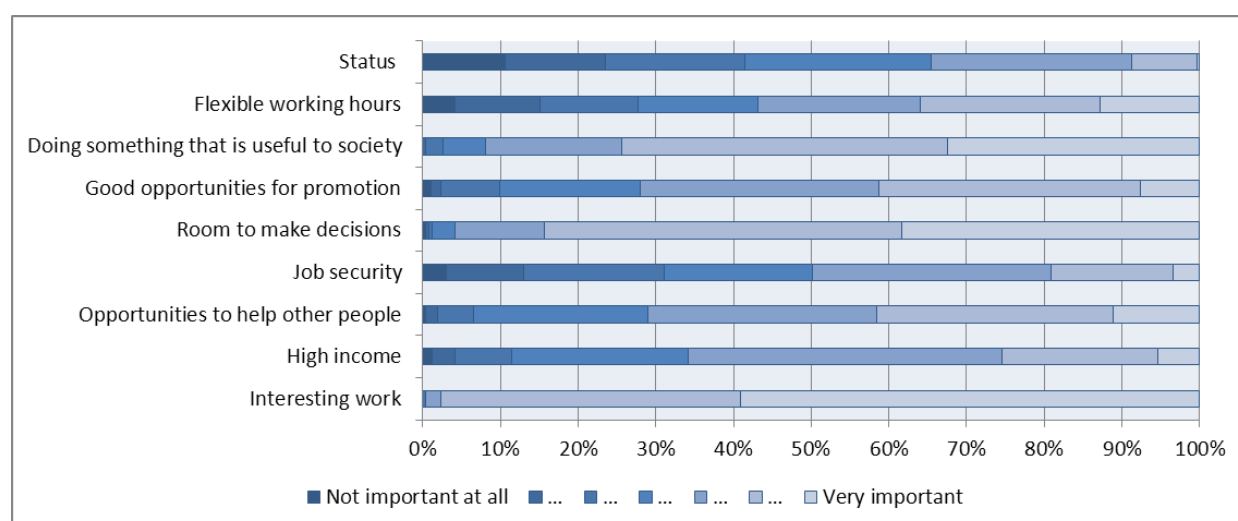
rather than classic Weberian ones. The item that posits a trade-off between equity and efficiency is also of interest. It shows that a greater share of respondents opt for choosing efficiency over equity concerns (44% versus 36%). All other items are more or less balanced between conflicting value preferences.

**Figure 7. Priorities as public servants (Q: Public services often need to balance different priorities. Where would you place your own position?)**



Top public executives have also asked a number of questions about their work motivations. Items in figure 9 differentiate between extrinsic, intrinsic, and altruistic motivation. Respondents were asked to indicate how important certain things are in their job. Answer categories ranged from 1 'not important at all' to 7 'very important'. While a high status, job security and income, are not of great importance to Dutch public executives, having room to make decisions, doing something useful for society and having interesting work were highly relevant for our respondents. This is line with the general notion that public managers have a rather high level of altruistic and intrinsic motivation, but extrinsic motivational aspects such as job security and status are of lesser importance.

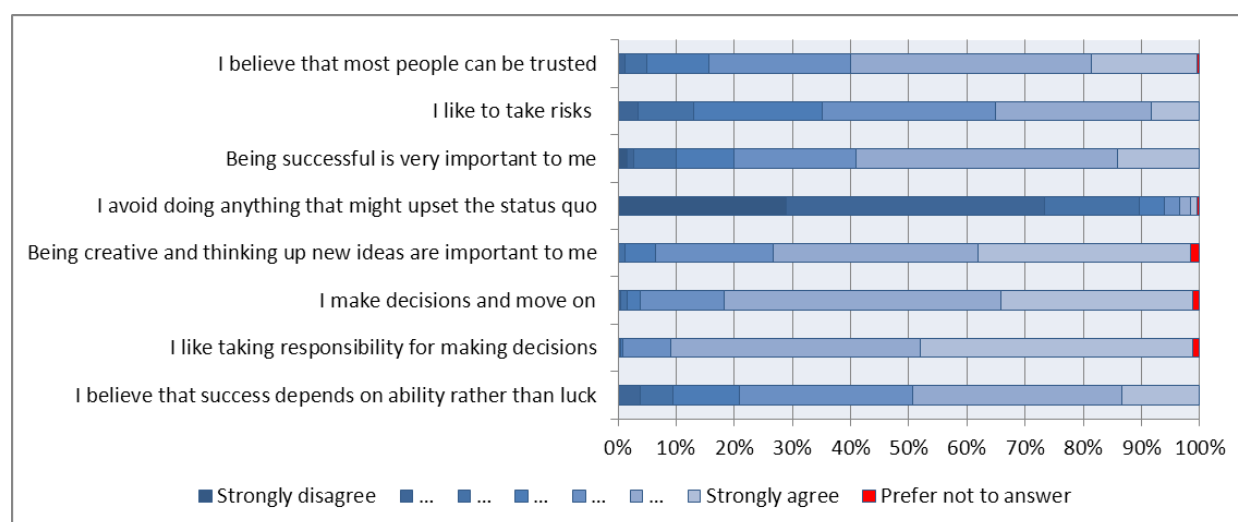
**Figure 8. Motivation (Q: How important do you personally think it is in a job to have)**



In a further set of questions, respondents have been asked to indicate to what extent they agree, or disagree, with a number of statements that tap into their social value preferences, and psychological

attitudes, including their locus of control and risk attitude. It is evident from item 4 that more than 70% of respondents have indicated that they do *not avoid* doing things which might upset the status quo. Item 2 shows that a majority of respondents (65%) agree that they like to take risks. Thus one can conclude that risk aversion seems not to be a huge topic for Dutch top executives - even though bureaucrats are often pictured as being risk averse. What is also interesting from figure 9 is that many respondents indicated that being successful is very important to them (80%). The last three items tap into one's locus of control. From the final item one can get the impression that many Dutch executives (80%) believe that personal ability has a much greater influence on success, rather than luck – meaning they themselves have control over their lives and careers. Thus it exemplifies a rather strong internal locus of control; the same holds true for item 7, 'I like taking responsibility for making decisions'. Item 6 points in a similar direction: quite a substantial share of respondents (90%) has indicated that they would prefer to make decisions and moving on.

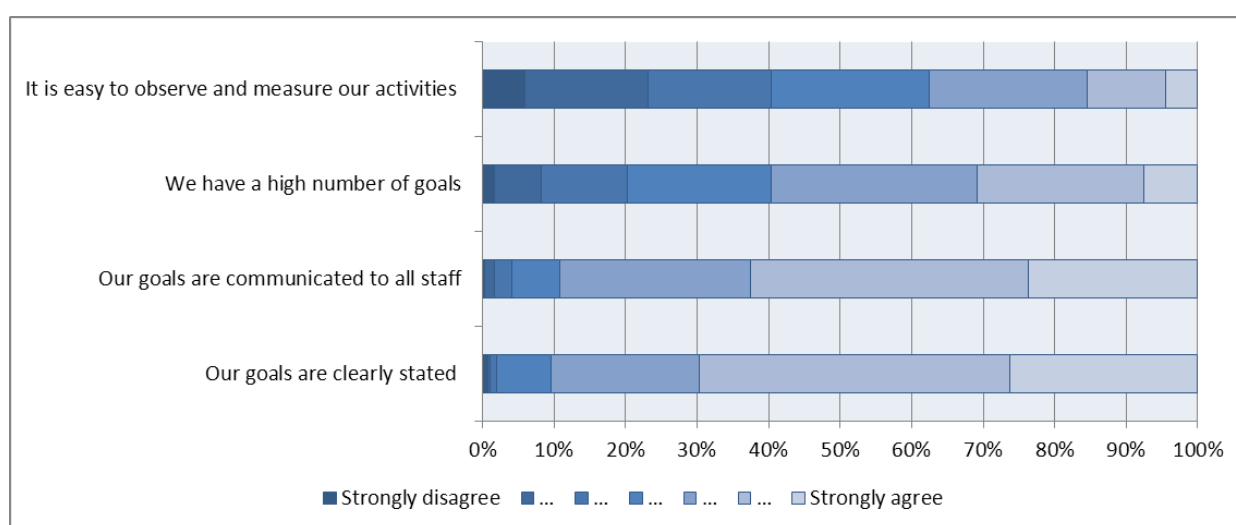
Figure 9. Social value preferences (Q: Please indicate how far you agree or disagree with the following statements)



## 5. Characteristics of the Work Context in Public Administration

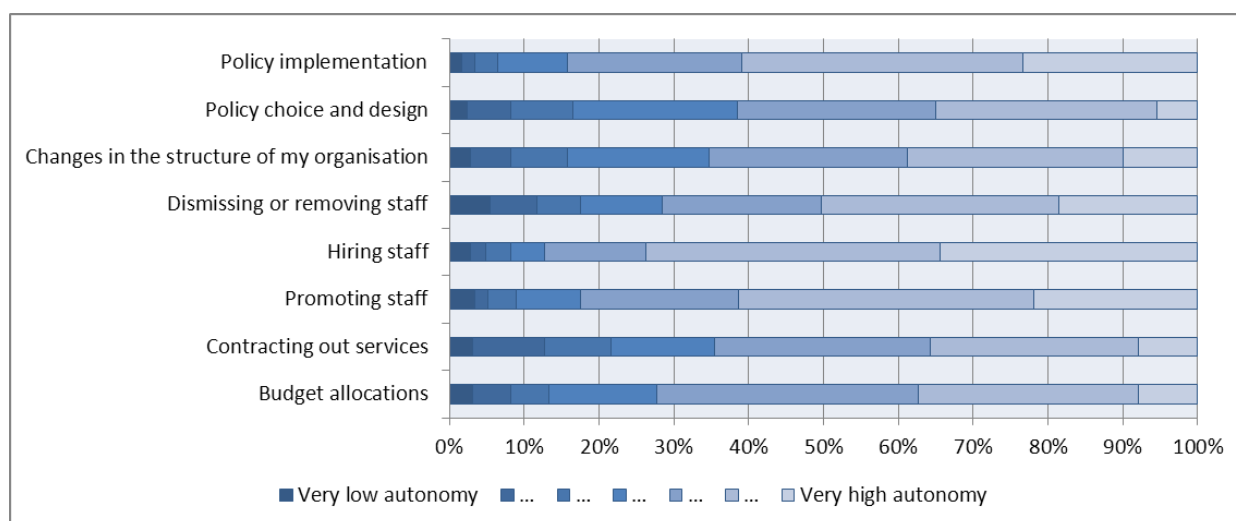
This section provides results for a set of questions about public executives' work contexts. First they have been provided with a battery of items that measure organizational goal ambiguity. Results are displayed in figure 10. The majority of respondents have indicated that their organization has clear goals (90%), and that it also communicates those goals to their staff (90%). However, at the same time, 40% of the respondents acknowledge the difficulty to observe and measure activities in their organization. In contrast, the same amount of respondents states that it is easy to do so, however, with a stronger distributional tendency towards disagreeing with it (mean: 3.88; sd: 1.57).

Figure 10. Goal ambiguity (Q: *To what extent do the following statements apply to your organization?*)



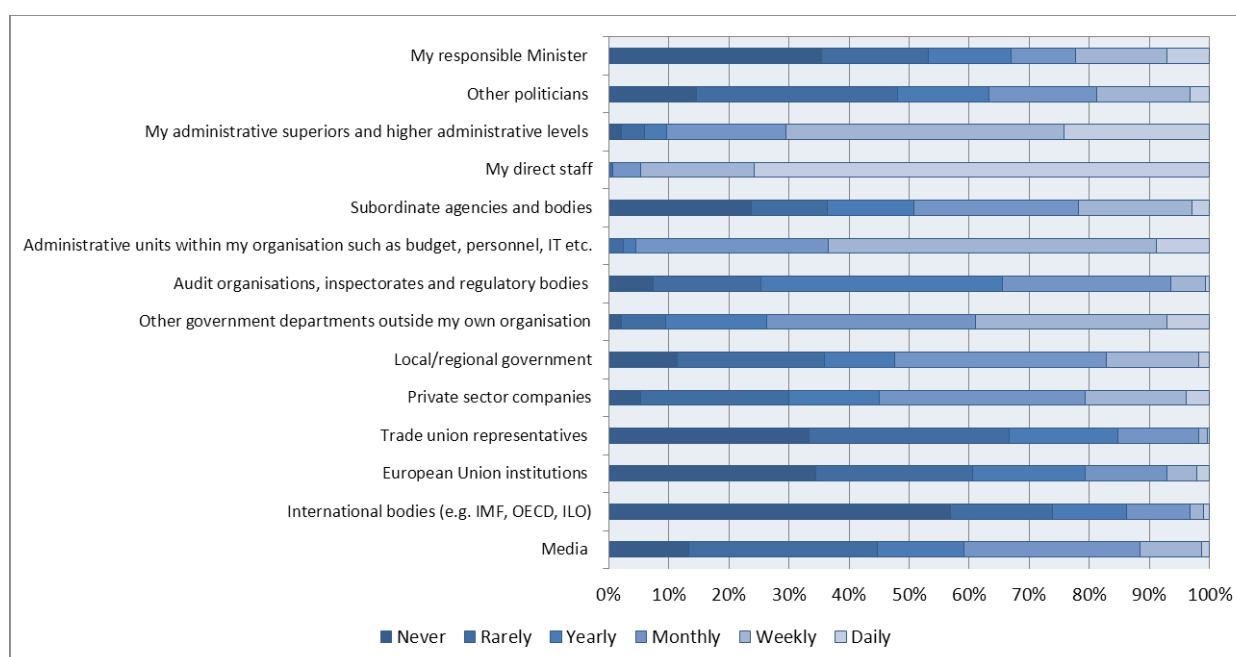
A following set of questions asks public executives to indicate the degree of autonomy they have with regard to varying aspects of their job. Figure 11 presents the findings from this battery of items. For management related tasks, such as hiring, promoting or removing staff, the majority of public executives have a high degree of managerial autonomy. The same holds true for implementing public policies. Here, 85% of respondents report a rather high autonomy. When it comes to more political tasks, such as designing or choosing public policies, their autonomy is less pronounced but still moderately strong (60%). However, all in all, the majority of public executives in the Dutch sample perceives to have a comparatively high managerial autonomy.

Figure 11. Degree of management autonomy (Q: *In my position, I have the following degree of autonomy with regard to*)



Respondents of the COCOPS survey have also been asked to indicate their interaction frequency with various actors, as depicted in figure 12. Answer possibilities ranged from never, rarely, yearly, monthly, weekly to daily. Not surprisingly, public executives mostly interact with their own staff and administrative units within their organisation. A total of 95% of respondents interact daily with their direct staff, and 60% of sampled executives interact with administrative units at least on a weekly basis. Less frequent interactions are taking place with international bodies – here 55% indicate that they never interact with any of these organisations. Interestingly, public executives in The Netherlands also never or rarely interact with their responsible ministers (53%), or other politicians (48%). This may be due to the fact that part of the sample was drawn from local top executives.

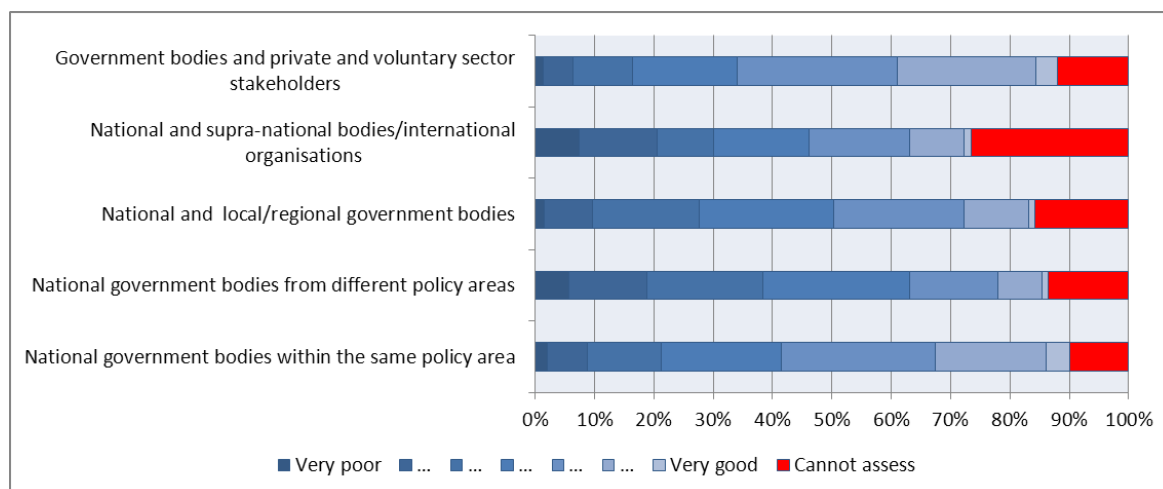
Figure 12. Interaction frequency (Q: *Please indicate how frequently you typically interact with the following actors or bodies*)



We also looked at the quality of coordination between actors and policy fields. Respondents were asked to characterize collaborations between various actors in their own policy field. Results are

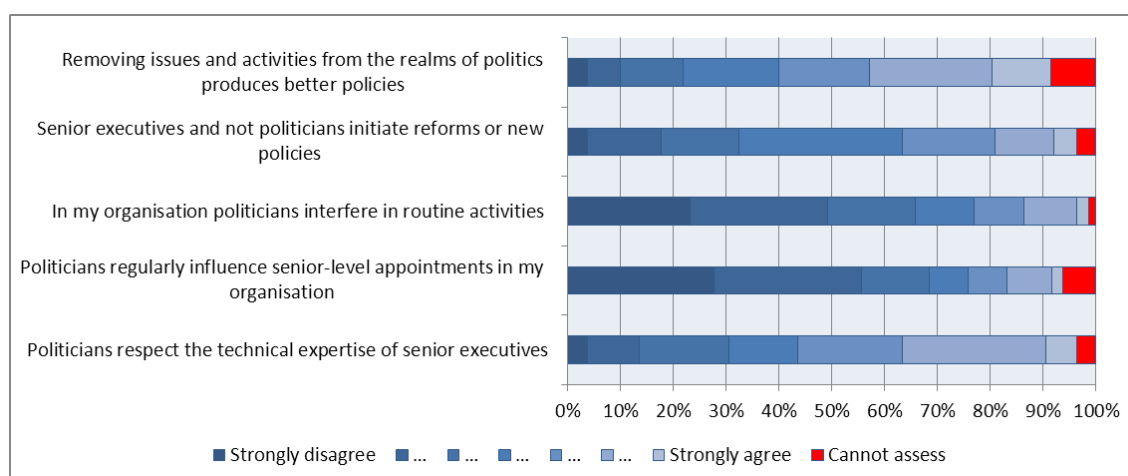
displayed in figure 13. The quality of coordination could be rated from 1 ‘very poor’ to 7 ‘very good’. First of all it has to be noted that a substantial share of respondents were not able to assess the items within this battery. This was especially true for item 2 which had 25% of respondents opting for the ‘cannot assess’ category. The coordination quality between national government bodies within the same policy area was the one with highest ratings – more than 50% find it to be good.

**Figure 13. Coordination quality (Q: How would you characterize collaboration in your own policy field between)**



Subsequently, public executives have been asked to assess the degree of politization within their work (figure 15). What is interesting from this is that only slightly more than 20% of respondents report political inference within their organisation when it comes to routine activities. This, again, exemplifies the managerial autonomy of Dutch public executives. From item 5 we can also see that more than half of the respondents think that politicians do respect the technical expertise of senior executives. Against this background, the amount of executives that state that politicians jointly initiate reforms or policies is rather low (30%). Also, senior level appointments are perceived by many respondents of being not very politicised (73%). Thus, looking at the overall degree of politization within the Dutch sample of public executives, there appears to be only a minor political influence on the work of top executives in the public sector.

**Figure 14. Degree of politization (Q: What is your view on the following statements)**



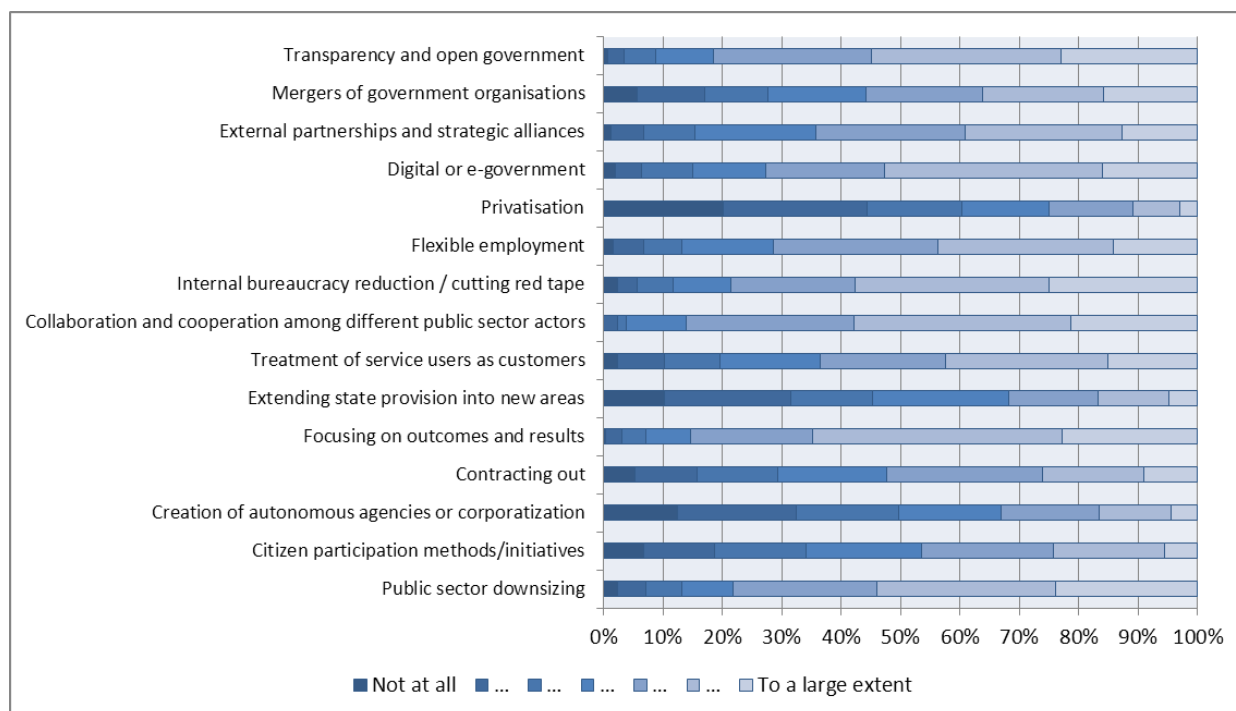
## 6. Relevance of NPM and post NPM Reforms

Within the COCOPS survey, public executives have also been surveyed with regard to how they perceive the relevance of NPM-style reforms in the Dutch public sector. In the following, results are presented for the policy field level, the organizational level and the individual level.

### 6.1 Policy field level

Public executives were asked to state how important various reform trends are in their policy area, as displayed in figure 15. Answer categories range from 1 'not at all' to 7 'to a large extent'. In this regard, public executives have rated collaboration and cooperation as an important trend (86%). Also the focus on outcomes and results is rated by them as being of great importance (85%), as well as transparency and open government (73%). The first two trends have already been identified by earlier items (e.g. in figures 7 and 8) to be of great importance for public executives in The Netherlands: collaborative governance, and private management techniques à la New Public Management. Of lower importance seems to be privatization (only 25% find it important) and the creation of (semi-)autonomous agencies (agencification) (only 34% find it important). Those reform trends have been quite influential in the past 20 years – also there has been a parliamentary inquiry on its effects on the ground in 2012. However, more recently, privatization and agencification efforts seem to have lost momentum.

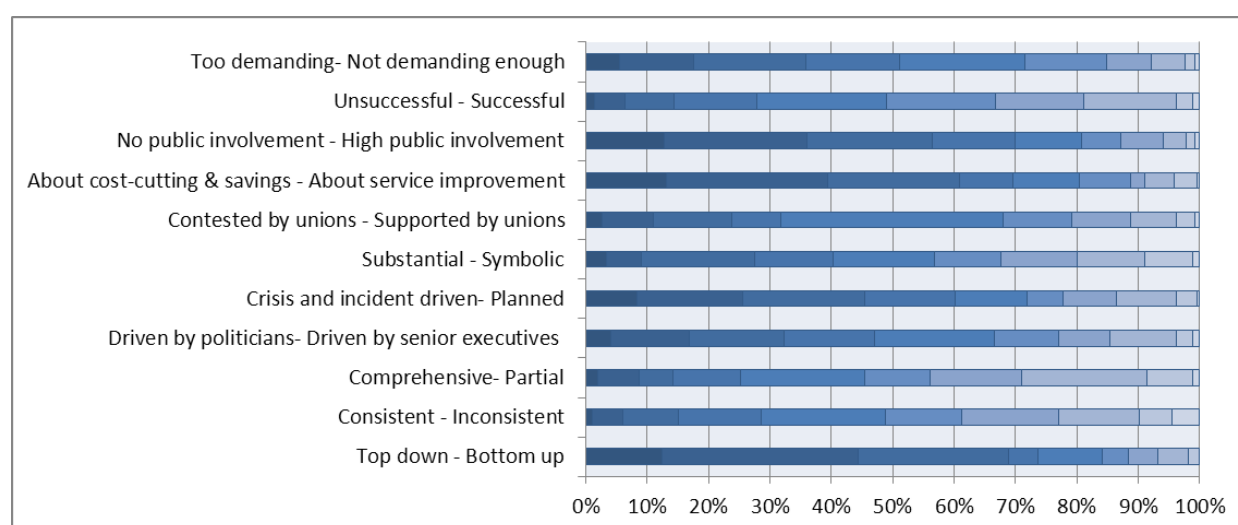
Figure 15. Importance of reform trends (Q: *How important are the following reform trends in your policy area?*)



Respondents were also asked to assess the dynamics of public sector reforms in their policy area. Results are displayed in figure 16. Most interestingly, a great majority of respondents (84%) state

that those reforms have been rather top down than bottom up. In a similar vein, only a very little number of respondents assess reforms to have had a high public involvement (20%). This stands slightly in contrast with the strong corporatist tradition within The Netherlands, but may also be informed by current reforms focusing on cost-cuttings and savings in response to the economic crisis. Public executives indicate that most reforms have, indeed, tended to be about cost-cutting and savings (80%), rather than about service improvement. Interestingly, assessments whether reforms have been more substantive than of a symbolic nature have been moderately balanced (57% versus 43%; on a .10 scale mean: 5.26, sd: 2.24). A similar picture emerges when being asked about reforms' consistency (49% versus 51%; mean: 4.76, sd: 2.16). Overall, half of the respondents rate reforms in The Netherlands as being rather unsuccessful (49%), while the other half would rate them as rather successful (51%).

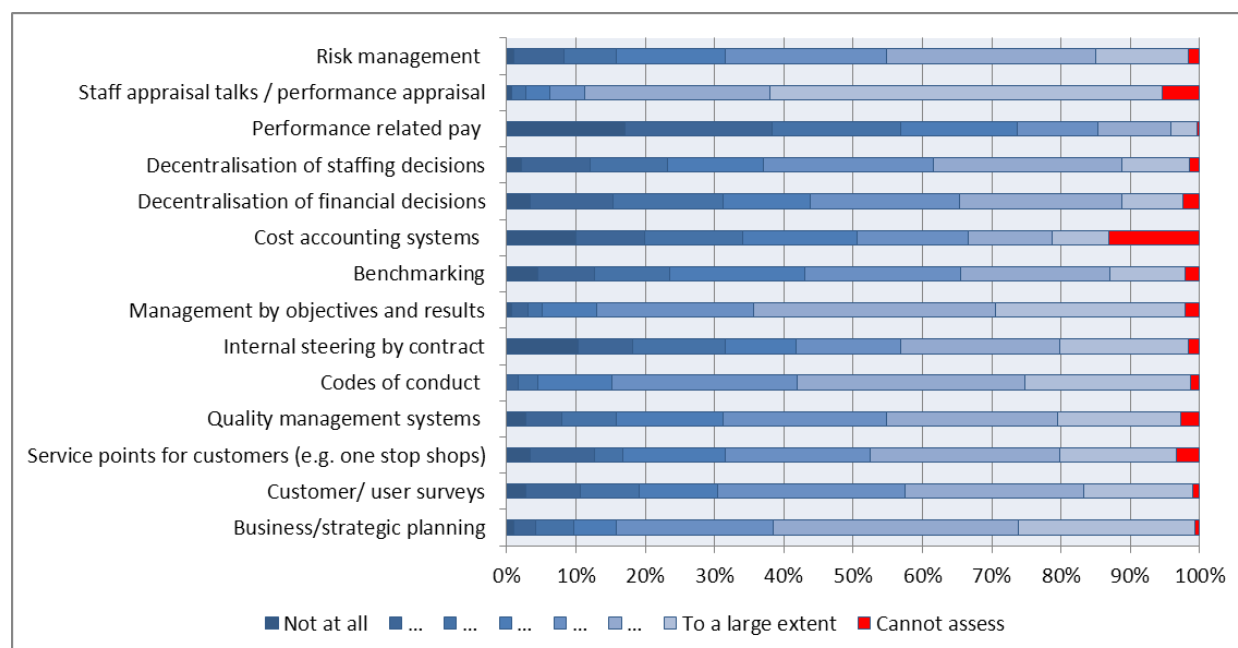
**Figure 16. Dynamics of public sector reform (Q: Public sector reforms in my policy area tend to be)**



## 6.2 Organizational level

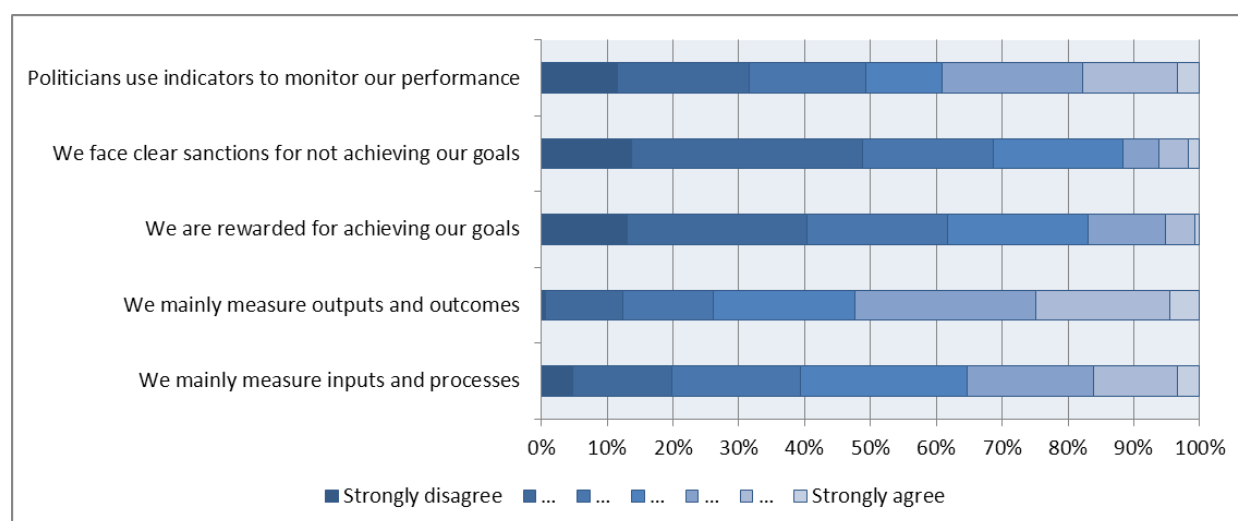
Within the COCOPS survey, Dutch top executives in the public sector have also been asked about the relevance of different management instruments used in their organization. From figure 17 we can see that in quite a substantial amount of organisations, staff appraisal talks and/or performance appraisals (93%) are utilized. Interestingly, considerably fewer public executives report the use of performance related pay within their organizations (37%). As already seen in previous figures, management by objectives and results (MbO) is a very popular management instrument in the Dutch public sector. This can also be exemplified by looking at item 8; here 95% of respondents regularly use MbO within their organization. Also the regular use of codes of conduct (85%), and strategic planning (84%) can be observed from our sample of Dutch public executives. Interestingly, a high number of executives indicate they are not able to assess whether their organization has a cost accounting system.

**Figure 17. Relevance of different management instruments (Q: To what extent are the following instruments used in your organization?)**



Subsequently, public executives have been asked to indicate the relevance of performance management within their organization. Items 5 and 6 provide evidence that within the organizations of the respondents, outputs and outcomes are more frequently considered to be measured (53%), when compared with inputs and processes (36%). This, again, suggests the relative importance of MbO as indicated by the previous figure. When looking at the items 2 and 3, one can also see that public executives neither, or very seldom, state that they face clear sanctions for not achieving results (12%), nor are they rewarded for achieving them (17%). This is a very interesting finding given the pronounced focus Dutch public executives put on achieving clear results for their work.

**Figure 18. Relevance of performance management (Q: To what extent do the following statements apply to your organization?)**

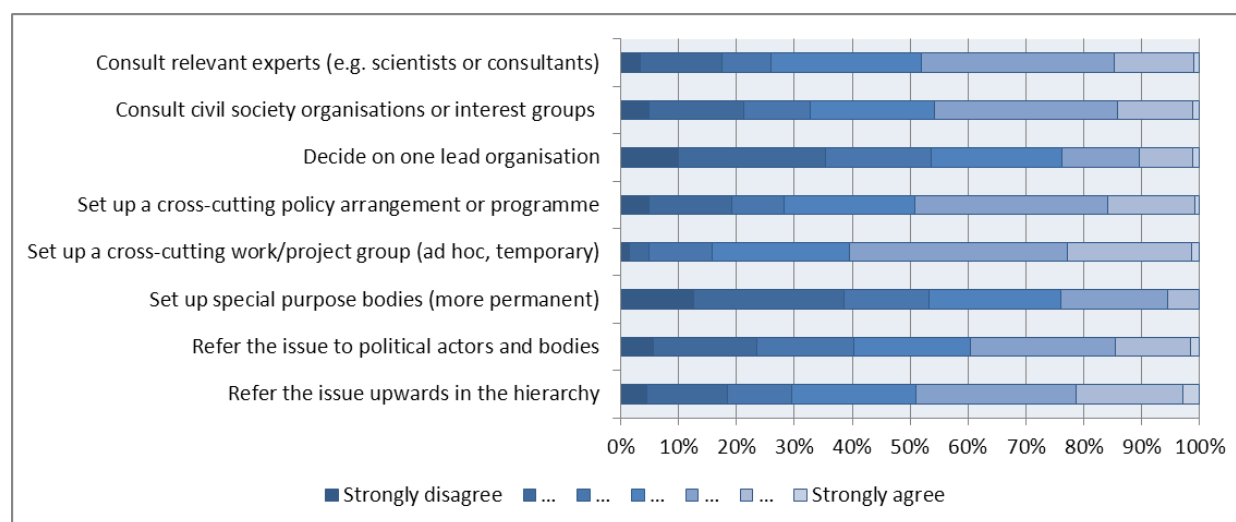


Respondents have been asked what they typically do to resolve coordination problems when working with other organizations (figure 19). Two solutions stand out: setting up a cross-cutting policy arrangement or programme (72%), and setting up a cross-cutting work/project group (84%). Deciding



on a single organisation to take the lead far less common (24%). This provides evidence to the general claim that public administration in The Netherlands is moving towards a more network style oriented governance system (Kickert 2002). In line with this, fewer than 50% of respondents suggest that they would refer the issue upwards in the hierarchy. This also reemphasizes the high managerial autonomy of the respondents, as we have already witnessed in figure 12. Setting up a permanent special purpose bodies is also rather relatively uncommon among our respondents (24%). This point emphasizes the importance of flexible governance arrangements in the Dutch public sector to tackle coordination problems in the short, or medium-run.

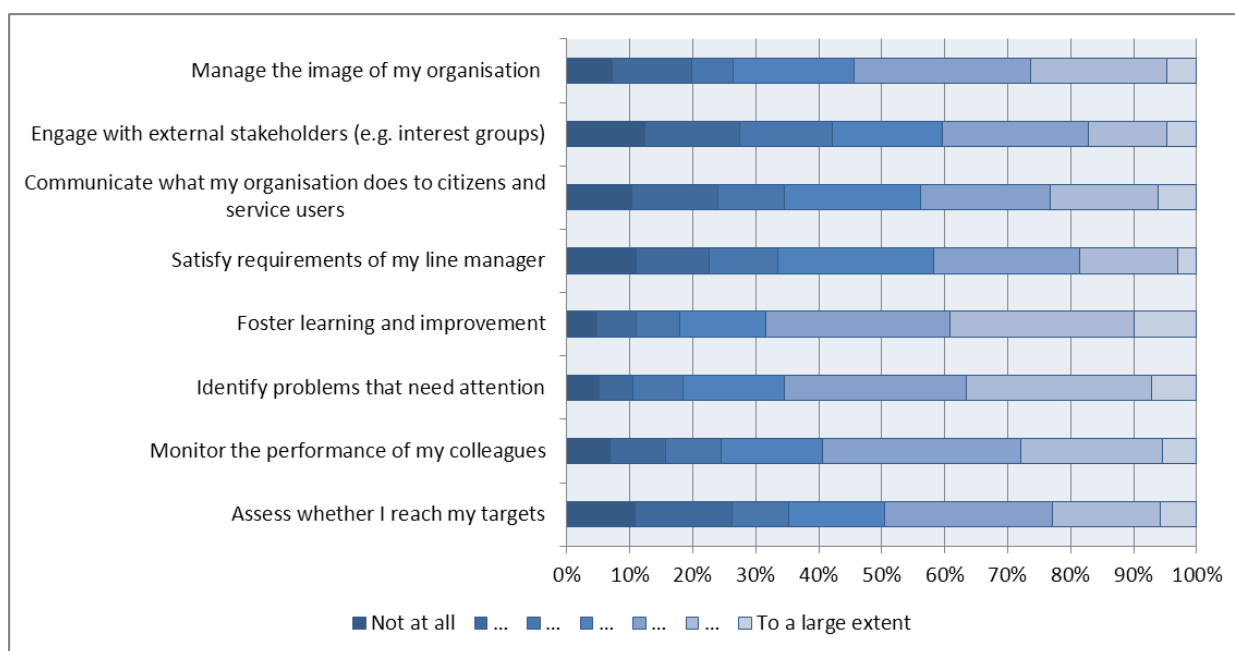
**Figure 19. Coordination solutions** (Q: *To resolve coordination problems when working with other organizations, we typically*)



### 6.3 Individual level

Public executives were also asked about their individual use of performance indicators, as displayed in figure 21. Interestingly, most of the respondents use performance information for internal purposes. For example, a majority of sampled public executives indicate that they use performance information to foster learning and improvement (68%), or to identify problems that need attention (65%). Using performance information for external purposes, however, is less strongly emphasized by our respondents. Looking at items 2 and 3, fewer respondents indicate that they use performance information, either for engaging with external stakeholders (40%), or to communicate what their organization does to citizens or service users (44%). Overall, however, performance information is used, though to different degrees, by many Dutch executives for internal and external purposes. Across the items, the number of respondents indicating they never use performance information for the stated purposes is roughly around 10%.

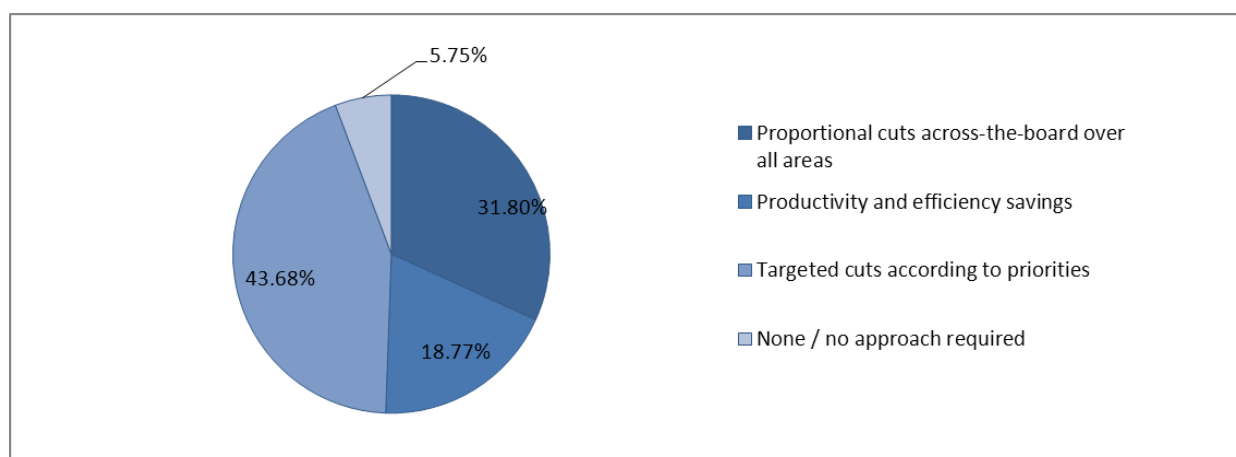
Figure 20. Use of performance indicators (Q: In my work I use performance indicators to)



## 7. Impact of the Fiscal Crisis on Public Administration

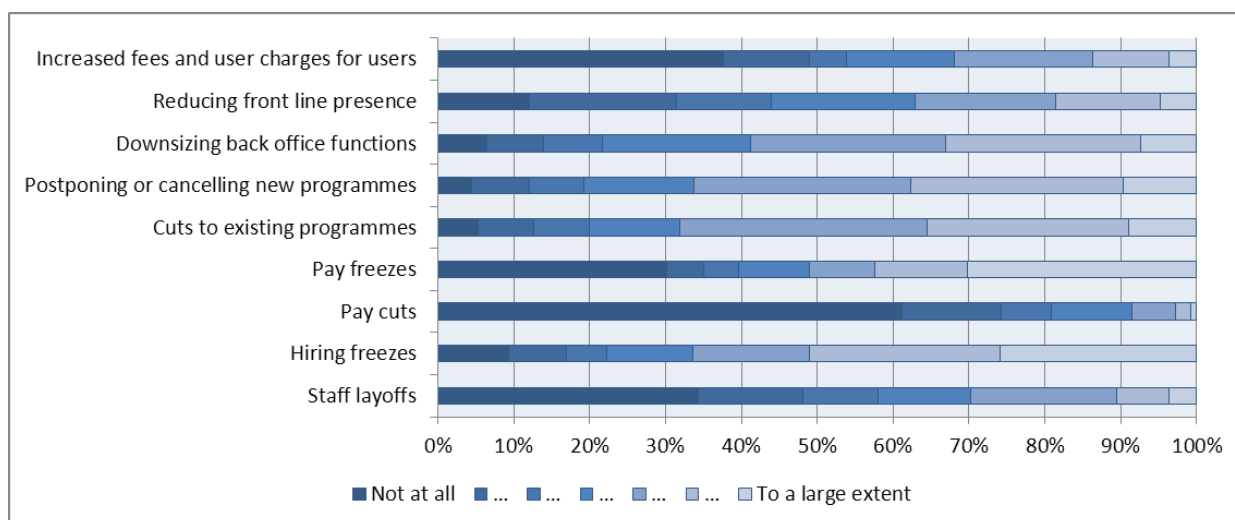
Respondents of the COCOPS survey have also been asked questions on the impact of the fiscal crisis on public administration in The Netherlands. Figure 21 provides an overview of public executives' answers on how they would describe the broader approach to realizing savings within their policy area. In this regard, the majority of Dutch public executives report that they would describe the broader approach to realizing savings in their policy area as targeted cuts according to priorities (44%). Second, 32% would describe it rather as proportional cuts across-the-board overall areas, and 19% as productivity and efficiency savings.

**Figure 21. Overall saving strategy (Q: In response to the fiscal crisis how would you describe the broader approach to realizing savings in your policy area?)**



Subsequently, respondents were asked to what extent the organization they work for has applied various cutback measures. In this regard, pay cuts was the measure which has been, according to our sampled Dutch public executives, substantially applied in only few organizations (9%). This is not very surprising, given that public sector pay is subject to collective agreements. However, hiring freezes are much more common (66%). The data also show is that citizens and service users are only in some rare instances burdened with a substantial increase in fees and user charges (32%). According to 76% of respondents, existing programmes have experienced cuts, or new programmes have been postponed or even canceled (78%).

Figure 22. Cutback measures at organizational level (Q: In response to the fiscal crisis, to what extent has your organization applied the following cutback measures?)

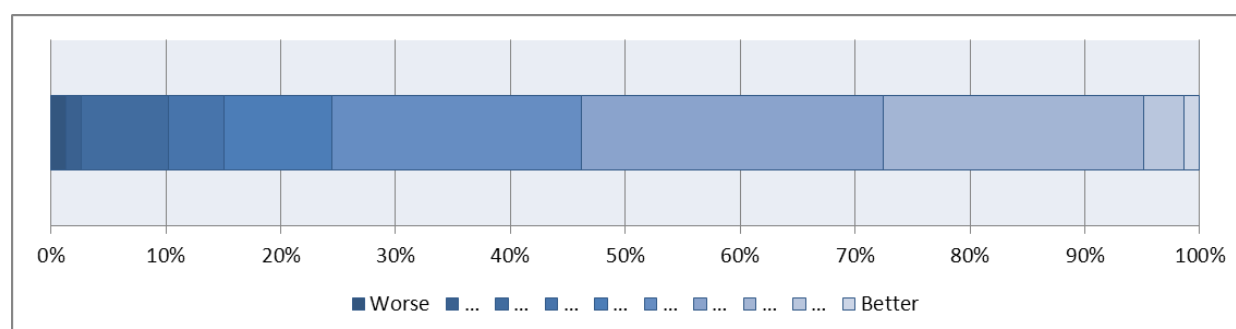


## 8. Outcomes of Public Administration Performance

### 8.1 Overall

Respondents were also asked to assess the overall performance of public administration within their country. Figure 23 presents the findings from an item that asked them to indicate how, compared to five years ago, the public administration runs in The Netherlands. Answer possibilities ranged from 1 'worse' to 10 'better'. Three fourths of the respondents have indicated that they would assess the way public administration runs in Netherlands as being better when compared with five years ago. This can also be illustrated by the question's mean of 6.34 (sd: 1.77). While one should not overstate the subjective assessments of public executives, all this points in the direction that recent public sector reforms have been rather successful.

**Figure 23. Overall PA assessment (Q: Compared with five years ago, how would you say things have developed when it comes to the way public administration runs in your country?)**

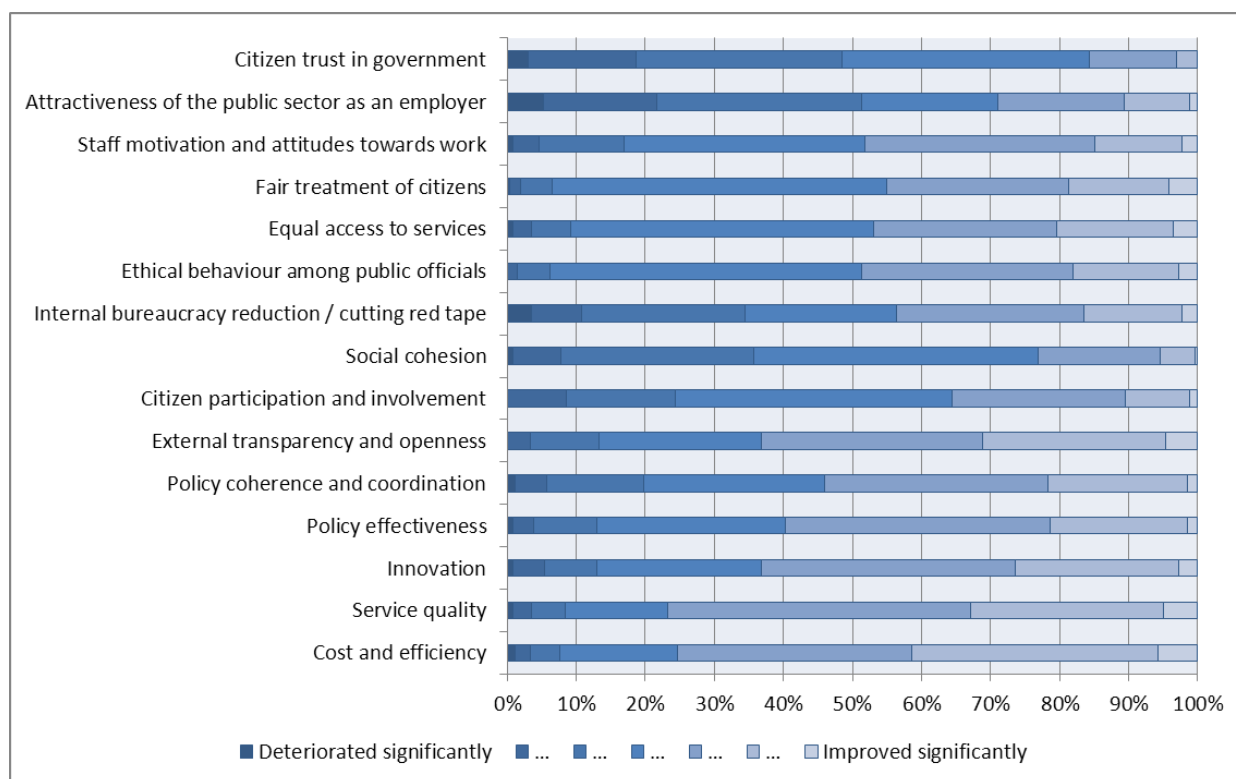


### 8.2 Policy Field

Subsequently, public executives have been asked to assess different performance dimensions within their policy area, and whether they have deteriorated or improved significantly over the last five years. Results are displayed in figure 24. The first bar displays the degree of perceived performance when it comes to citizen trust in government. Public executives rate this considerably low, with only 16% tending to describe this particular performance dimension as having improved, and 49% stating that it has deteriorated (the others opted for the middle category). This is not very surprising and may reflect popular perceptions, repeatedly hyped in the media, of a so-called Dutch-dip in citizens' trust in government. Results of item 6 which probes for ethical behaviour among public officials, is also of interest. Prior to the COCOPS data collection taking place, a number of ethic scandals involving public officials and politicians have been reported in the Dutch media. Thus it comes not as a great surprise that only slightly less than half of the surveyed public executives think that ethical behaviour among public officials has improved over the past 5 years. However, when looking at more managerial oriented performance dimensions, such as service quality and cost and efficiency, our respondents repeatedly reported high levels of improvements. Remembering their rather negative

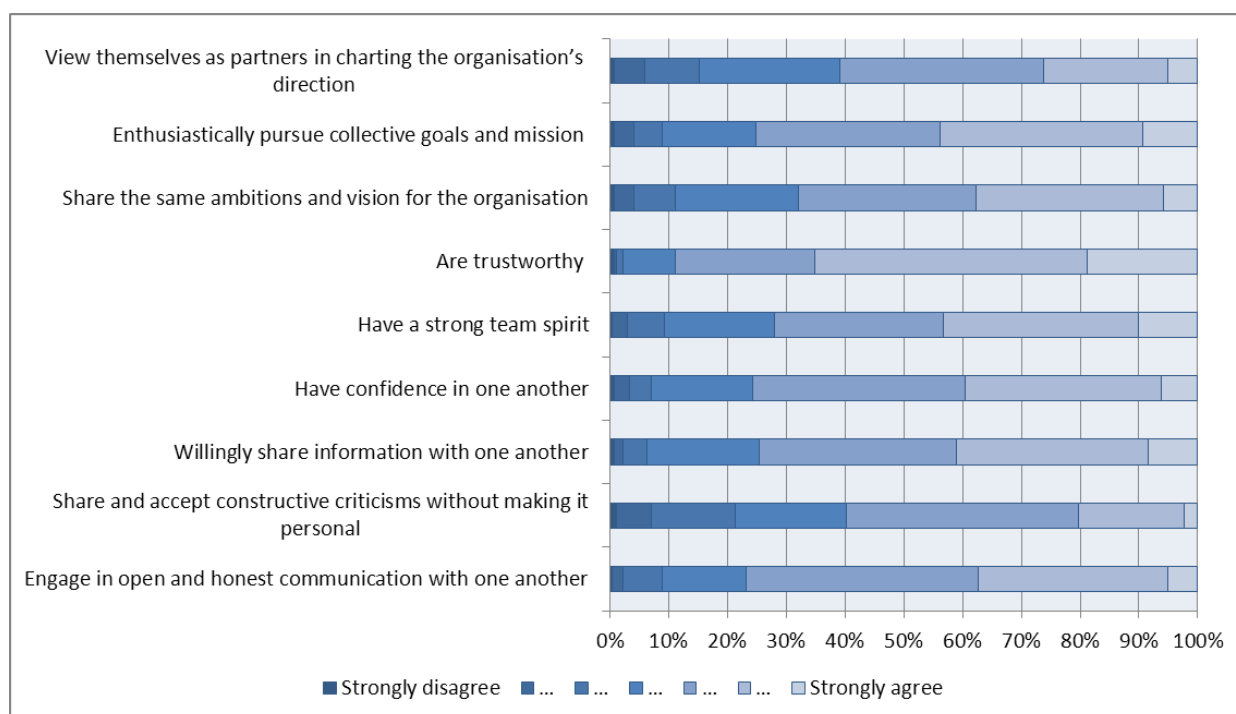
assessments towards citizen trust, this may point towards a trade-off between more equity oriented reform dimensions and goals of efficiency and effectiveness.

**Figure 24. Different performance dimensions (Q: Thinking about your policy area over the last five years how would you rate the way public administration has performed on the following dimensions?)**



Respondents have also been asked to respond to a series of items that tap into their organizational social capital. They were given the possibility to respond to a series of statements by answering on a 7 point Likert scale whether they agree, or disagree with the mentioned statement. Overall, in figure 26 we find high levels of structural, relational and cognitive social capital (Nahapiet and Goshtal 1998). For example, item 4 asks to assess whether public executives think that people in their organization are trustworthy. 89% of respondents indicate they agree with this statement. Looking whether people in their organization willingly share information with each other, 75% of our respondents agree. This indicates that from our sampled top executives, a great share of them operate in organizations with high organizational social capital, meaning high levels of shared organizational value-sets, trust and pro-social behaviour among their employees.

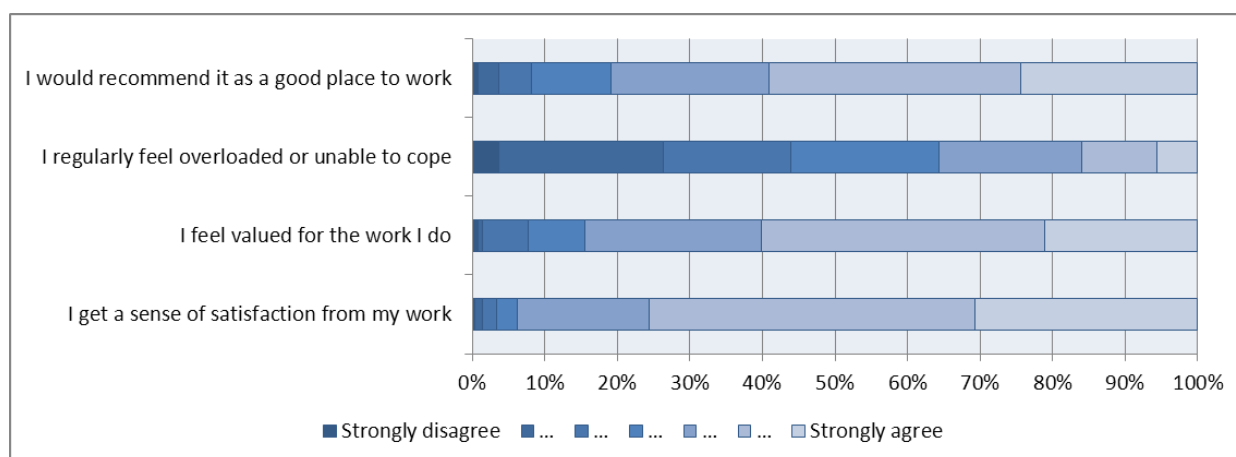
Figure 25. Social capital and trust (Q: *People in my organization*)



### 8.3 Individual Level

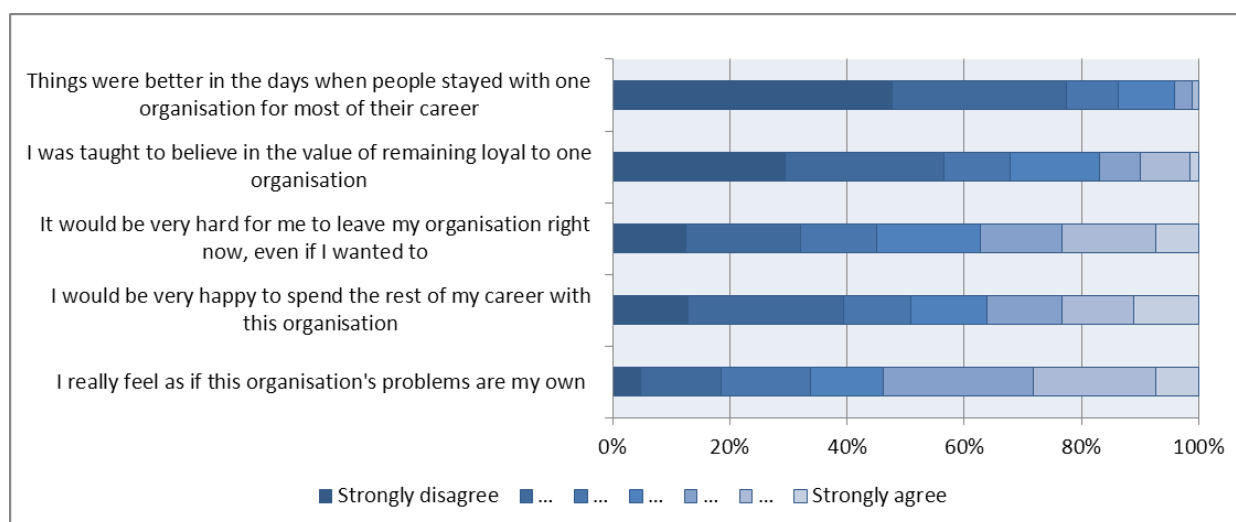
We also asked the respondents questions that dealt with them individually. First, they were asked to answer four questions that tap into their job satisfaction. When asked whether they get a sense of satisfaction from their work, more than 90% of our sampled public executives indicated so. Contrarily, some 35% of respondents reported that they regularly feel overloaded or unable to cope, however, more than 40% responded that this does not hold for them (the others opted for the middle category). This shows that while most of our respondents feel satisfied with their work, some of them nevertheless feel overloaded. We may assume that this feeling of being overloaded is not transferred into dissatisfaction because of their strong intrinsic and altruistic motivation, as observed in figure 9. They may perceive it as their duty.

**Figure 26. Job satisfaction (Q: When thinking about my work and the organization I work for)**



The COCOPS survey also incorporated a battery of items on organizational commitment. Respondents have been asked to assess five statements with regard to the organization they work for, as displayed in figure 27. Only very few respondents agreed that things were better when people stayed with one organization for most of their career (4%). Given their extensive experience in other sectors and organizations, as evident from figure 5, it is not surprising that our sampled public executives do not agree with this statement. The respondents' loyalty to one organization proves not to be overly high (17%), which can be interpreted in the light of the aforementioned circumstances. However, when asked whether respondents feel the organization's problems as being their own, a larger share agreed with this (34%). This may indicate their strong work ethic, and identification with the current organization they work for. But it also slightly stands in contrast with the aforementioned items.

**Figure 27. Organizational commitment (Q: When thinking about my work and the organization I work for)**

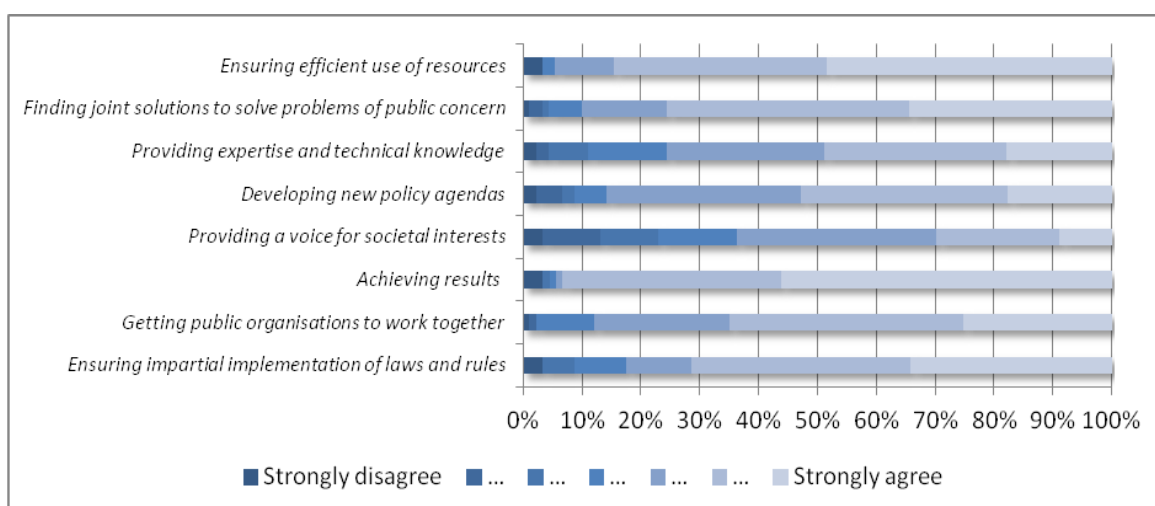




## 9. Findings from the Employment sector

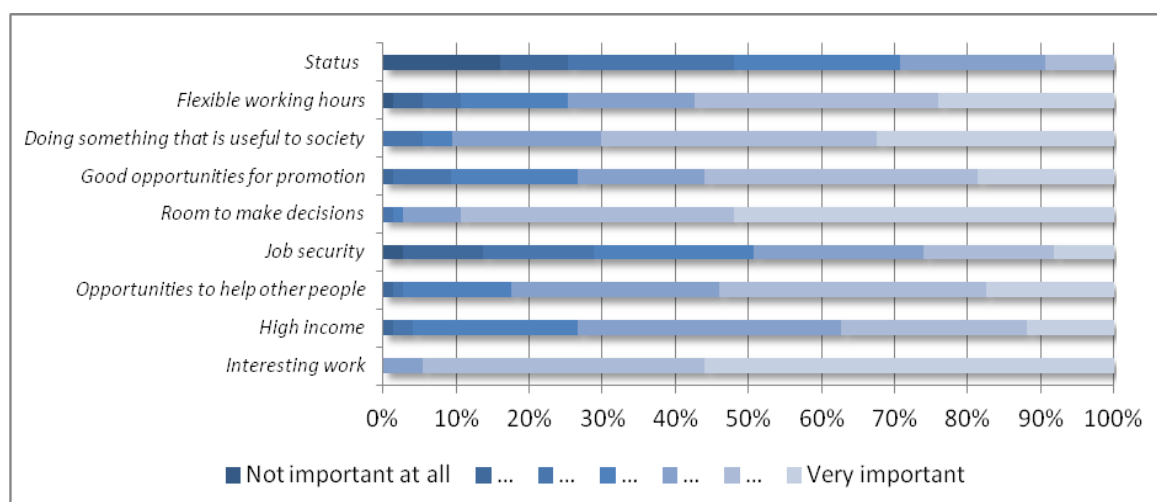
Subsequently, findings for the employment sector (Divosa sample) are presented. There are two respondents that work within the employment sector, but do not come from the Divosa sample. They have been omitted in the subsequent description of findings. First, we look at public executives' identities and self-understandings as presented in figure 28. Compared to the general findings, most executives from the employment sector exhibit similar answer patterns. For example, within the employment sample, more than 90% of the sample understand their roles as public executives mainly by ensuring an efficient use of resources. However, item 5 displayed that public executives in the employment sector are more likely to understand their role as providing a voice for society (difference of 11 percentage points). This may stem from the fact that in the employment sector public employees more often interact with citizens directly, when compared with a ministry, for example. Also as regards the item that asked for 'developing new policy agendas', there are some differences. Respondents from the employment sector are less likely to agree with this statement. This is not surprising, given that this sector is primarily concerned with delivering employment services to citizens.

Figure 28. Divosa sample: identity and self-understanding (Q: I mainly understand my role as public executive as)



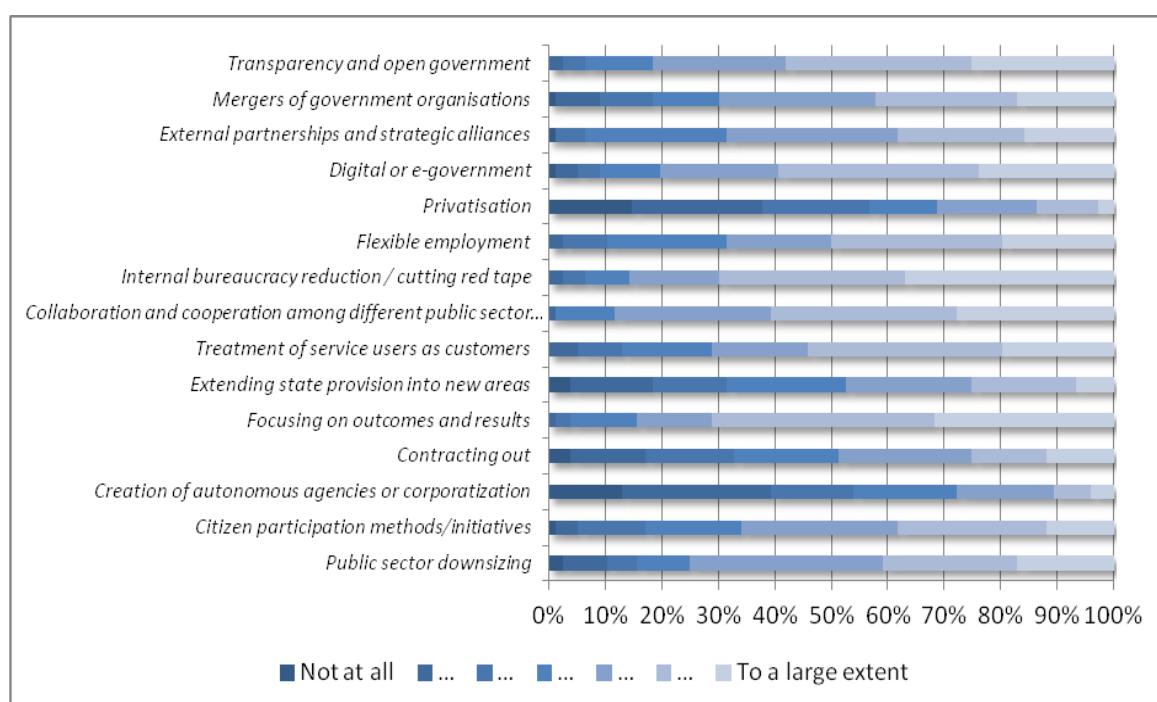
We also looked at the differences/ similarities between the general population and the employment sector respondents in terms of their work motivations (figure 30). The most striking differences can be seen for respondents' perceived importance regarding flexible working hours, high income, and opportunity to help others. For public executives in the Dutch employment sector, it is much more important to have flexible working hours when compared to the general population of respondents (difference of 23 percentage points). Looking at respondents' appreciation for high income, it is more important for public executives in the employment sector to have a high income (difference of 10 percentage points). In general, however, these respondents tend to earn lower incomes than the other respondents. However, at the same time they also have a higher internal motivation (opportunity to help others; difference of 10 percentage points). Thus one may assume that public executives belonging to a social service delivery oriented sector may be more inclined to exhibit higher levels of internal and, interestingly, external motivation.

**Figure 29. Divosa sample: Motivation (Q: How important do you personally think it is in a job to have)**



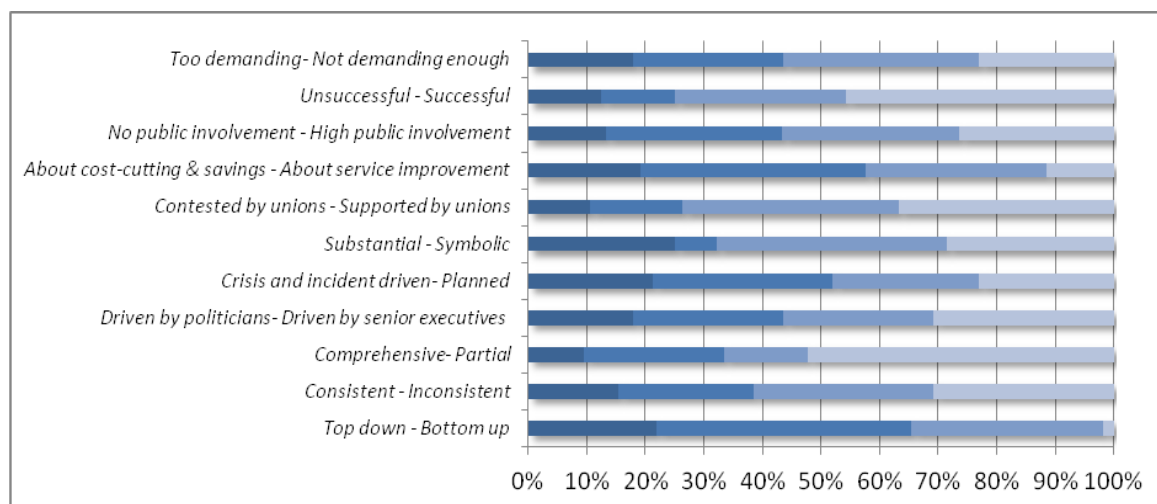
We also looked at the difference between the employment sample and the general sample when it comes to their perceptions of the importance of reform trends in their policy area as displayed in figure 30. The most notable differences (20 percentage points) can be seen in the area of extending state provision into new areas. In the employment sector, public executives were much more likely to perceive this as an important trend. This is in line with the expansion of the tasks of social services in the Netherlands. Another interesting trend is the increased conceptualization of service users as customers (13 percentage points differences) in the employment sector, which may have come as a side-effect of the increased professionalization of the Dutch employment services. Interestingly, citizen participation is also more likely to be regarded as an important in trend in the employment sector (difference of 10 percentage points).

**Figure 30. Divosa sample: Importance of reform trends (Q: How important are the following reform trends in your policy area?)**



When looking at the perceived dynamics of public sector reforms (figure 31), interesting differences can be observed for items 7, 8 and 9. In the employment sector, public executives are more likely to state that reforms tend to be crisis- and incident-driven, rather than planned (difference of 10 percentage points). Similarly in our sub-sample, respondents are more inclined to state that reforms have been driven by politicians, rather than by senior executives (difference of 8 percentage points). Additionally, within the employment sector respondents are less likely to indicate that reforms tend to be consistent rather than inconsistent (difference of 12 percentage points).

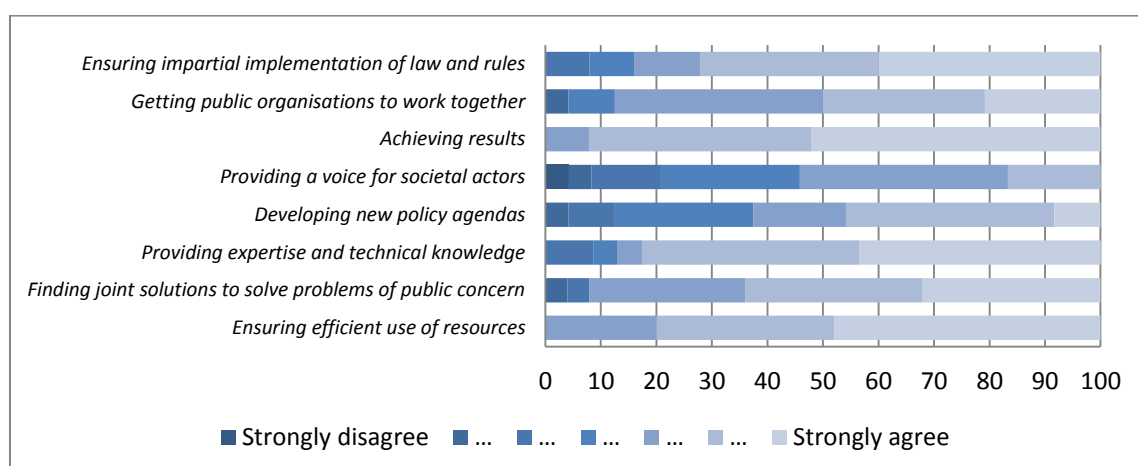
**Figure 31. Divosa sample: Dynamics of public sector reform (Q: Public sector reforms in my policy area tend to be)**



## 10. Findings from the Health sector

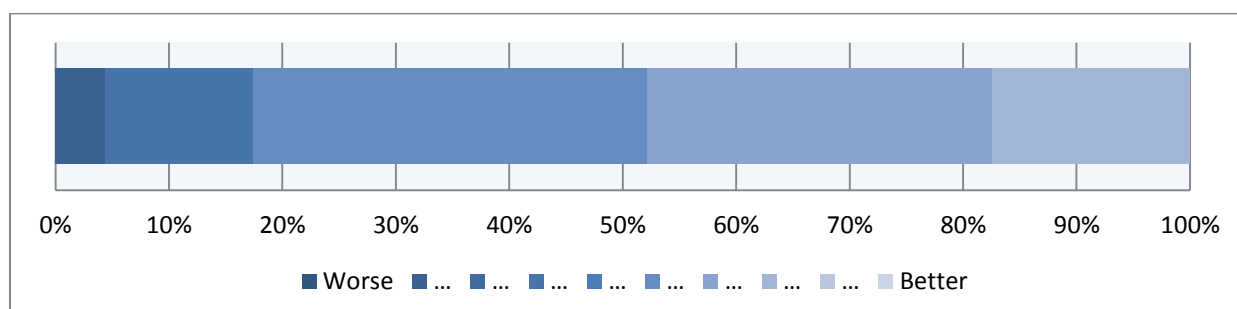
Subsequently we present some findings for the health sector, however, it should be noted that these findings only make 9% of the entire population of the Dutch COCOPS survey (25 respondents). We first looked at the identity and self-understanding of Dutch respondents within the health sector (figure 32). First of all we can see that most respondents within the Dutch health sector understand their role as public executive by ensuring and efficient use of resources. This is comparable to the observations made within the employment sector, so as for the overall sample of Dutch public executives. Furthermore, we can see that all respondents within the health sector state that they agree that they see their role of executive mainly by achieving results. This highlights the strong results-driven self-understanding of these health sector executives, but can also be observed for the employment sector (figure 29). Interestingly, some respondents (21%) from the health sector do not understand their role as executive by providing a voice for society. This, however, only reflects the responses made by a total of 4 respondents and should thus not be overstated.

Figure 32. Health sample: identity and self-understanding (Q: I mainly understand my role as public executive as)



We also looked at the health sector public executives' overall assessment of public administration (figure 33). We can see that evaluations of public administration in general are rather positive (mean of 6.2 with one standard deviation of 1.5). compared to the general Dutch COCOPS sample this is slightly more positive. In general this may also point in the direction that overall assessment of public executives are quite robust to differences in their sectoral stance.

Figure 33. Health sample: Overall PA assessment (Q: Compared with five years ago, how would you say things have developed when it comes to the way public administration runs in your country?)



## 11. Conclusion

Summarizing the findings from the Dutch sample of the COCOPS executives' survey reveals interesting insights. First, the data clearly shows the effects of administrative reforms aimed at introducing private sector management techniques into the public sector on various facets of public executives' work in the Netherlands. For example, a substantial share of respondents emphasized the importance of economic work motives and an efficient use of resources for the work they do. Moreover, delivering results takes a central role in public executives' work. More than 90% of the Dutch respondents stated that they mainly understand their role of public executive as achieving results. In this vein, Dutch public executives also like to take risks and are thus not perceived as being risk-averse - a picture of bureaucrats that is often painted (being risk-averse). Moreover, when compared to the respondents from all 10 participating countries that implemented the COCOPS survey, we can see that Dutch public executives are more likely to take risks. This reflects the increasing room for decision-making past reforms in the Netherlands have brought to top executives in the public sector. In this regard, it was also observed that the degree of managerial autonomy of Dutch public executives was much higher than average scores for the entire COCOPS sample.

Second, the network-type governance arrangements that prevail in the Dutch public sector can be recognized when looking at the Dutch set of respondents. For example respondents' attitudes towards solving cross-cutting problems were generally in favor of finding joint solutions with other actors. However, coordination quality was repeatedly rated as medium at best, but still slightly better than average scores for the entire COCOPS sample. Furthermore, when it came to solving coordination problems when working with other organizations, network-style arrangements such as setting-up a cross-cutting policy arrangement or programmes, or project groups were repeatedly emphasized as viable solutions. This becomes even more pronounced when looking at the COCOPS sample of 10 countries: Here, it is far less common to engage in such network-style problem-solving structures, and referring the problem upward the hierarchy is more often stated as an appropriate solution.

When it comes to public managers' evaluations of reform dynamics, one can see that administrative reforms in the Netherlands have been rather implemented in a top-down manner, with very little public involvement. This is roughly in line with evaluations of other European public executives. When it comes to the evaluations of those reforms, many public executives assess managerial dimensions such as efficiency gains or improvements in quality as having improved over the past years. Also rather generic evaluations how public administration runs in general are positive. However, for 'soft' aspects of reforms, such as citizen trust or social cohesion, their answers more strongly point in the direction of having deteriorated over the past five years. A more or less similar picture emerges when looking at the full COCOPS sample. This may point in the direction of a possible trade-off in public values between managerial efficiency and social cohesion in the Netherlands, and perhaps also beyond.

The extent to which public executives have stated that the organization they work for has applied various cutback measures in response to the financial crisis was also observed within the survey. While pay cuts have been mostly not used, some organizations have experience hiring freezes and cuts or the postponing of existing or new programmes. A similar picture emerges when looking at the set of respondents from the entire COCOPS sample. Thus it seems that organizational responses to the financial crisis in European public sector have been comparable across countries.

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